



MRS. SARAH WENTWORTH MORTON

In possession of Misses Hannah M.
and Grace Edwards, of Boston

PHILENIA
THE LIFE AND WORKS
of
SARAH WENTWORTH MORTON
1759 - 1846

By

EMILY PENDLETON and MILTON ELLIS

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To
MRS. MILTON ELLIS
and
MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH A. PENDLETON,
whose tolerant and good-humored patience
has greatly facilitated its completion,
this study is
gratefully dedicated.

FOREWORD

Although Sarah Wentworth Morton was the most noteworthy American poetess during possibly the entire span between Mrs. Anne Bradstreet and Mrs. Sigourney, and certainly during her own generation, immediately succeeding the Revolution, it is only as author of a novel which she did not write that she is occasionally awarded a sentence or a paragraph in the histories of American literature. Miss Pendleton's biography of her, in fact, begun as her Master's thesis at the University of Maine in 1926-7, was undertaken on the supposition that Mrs. Morton was author of *The Power of Sympathy*. When subsequent investigation demonstrated that the claims for her authorship were without foundation, and at the same time threw added light upon herself and her real literary activities, it appeared desirable to attempt a re-estimation of her life work and her literary significance. By this time the process of investigation and revision had reached so complicated a stage of collaboration that it has seemed best to print the resulting conclusions as a work of joint authorship.

In view of the fact that the longest sketch of Mrs. Morton prior to Miss Pendleton's thesis did not extend beyond the equivalent of two ordinary pages of print, the amount of information regarding her which has proved available is rather surprising. Autobiographical hints in her own works, especially *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, and data gleaned from contemporary newspapers, magazines, and public records, and from the correspondence and diaries of her friends and critics have enabled the writers to reconstruct her life, character, and work, her literary reputation and its decline, with more satisfactory fullness than has been possible with personages of greater note.

Most of the source material outside of her own works has been gathered at the libraries of the American Historical Society, Harvard University, the City of Boston, the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and the Massachusetts Antiquarian Society. Use has also been made of the University of Maine Library, the Bangor Public Library, the Boston Athenaeum, the William S. Clements Library at the University of Michigan, and other libraries. To the custodians of all of these institutions

grateful acknowledgments are made, especially to Messrs. Julius H. Tuttle of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Clarence S. Brigham of the American Antiquarian Society, and Raymond L. Walkley, formerly Librarian of the University of Maine, for their courtesy and accommodation. Thanks are also due to Mr. Albert Matthews and to the members of the Apthorp and Morton families—Mrs. Alice W. Parker, Mr. William C. Bond, Mr. Leonard F. Apthorp, Mr. John V. Apthorp, and Miss Mary G. Gray—who have obligingly answered correspondence. Mr. Walter Littlefield, though disagreeing as to the conclusions reached, has been consistently kind and interested. To Miss Pauline Aiken the authors are indebted for valuable assistance in determining the authorship of *The Power of Sympathy*; and to Miss Louise Gordon Shuttles' later Columbia Master's thesis on Mrs. Morton, for calling their attention to a letter on the Apthorp-Morton duel in an issue of the *Herald of Freedom* which was missing from the file consulted at Boston. The help of Mr. Louis T. Ibbotson, the present Librarian of the University of Maine, has been of much value in connection with the numerous tasks involved in publication. To many others who have contributed generous assistance, only a general expression of thanks can be given.

Emily Pendleton
Milton Ellis

Orono, December, 1931

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CHAPTER I

HERITAGE AND GIRLHOOD

1759-1781

The poetess Sarah Wentworth Morton possessed to a large degree that pride of family which is said to be a racial characteristic of her Welsh ancestors. She was fond of referring to their greatness, and as a girl added the surname Wentworth to her plain baptismal name, Sarah Apthorp,¹ in order to share the distinction of her mother's family as well as her father's. The latter was derived from East Apthorp,² an ambitious and imaginative Welshman, who migrated to New England at the end of the seventeenth century. His wife, "a celebrated beauty, with a large fortune," was Susan, daughter of the Reverend Dr. Ward, and a relative of the noble Wards of Boxeley. Her portrait, by Sir Peter Lely, shows her to have possessed remarkable beauty, some of which may have been inherited by her great-granddaughter. East Apthorp was a man of cultivated tastes, particularly in painting and architecture; in which fields he seems to have transmitted his abilities to several generations of descendants. Mrs. Morton was fond of tracing his talents in her children and in her kinsman, the architect Charles Bulfinch. East Apthorp died in Boston, 25 September, 1713, and his widow 7 July, 1714.³

Their son Charles, born in England, was educated at Eton. He came to New England after his father's death and became one of the most distinguished merchants of Boston.⁴ An obituary notice in the Portsmouth *New Hampshire Gazette* called him "the greatest Merchant on this Continent." His prestige was considerably increased by his holding also the official positions of commissary and paymaster of the royal land and naval forces at Boston.

¹Noble, John, "Some Massachusetts Tories," in *Pubs. of the Colonial Soc. of Mass.*, vol. v (*Transactions*, 1897, 1898), p. 290.

²See Mrs. Morton's *My Mind and Its Thoughts* (hereafter *M.M.I.T.*), p. 285. She refers to him as John Apthorp; but he signed his name as an officer of King's Chapel, 1700, as East Apthorp (*Winsor, Memorial History of Boston*, II, 201).

³Wentworth, John W., *Wentworth Genealogy*, vol. I, p. 519, note.

⁴*Ibid.*

On 13 January, 1726, he married Grizzell Eastwicke, of Boston. She was daughter of John and Grizzell Eastwicke and granddaughter of Sir John Lloyd, who after the battle of Worcester had assisted in carrying Charles II to France. Grizzell Eastwicke was born 16 August, 1709, on the island of Jamaica, and was brought to Boston in 1716. She died at the home of her son James in Quincy, Mass., 16 September, 1796, in her eighty-eighth year. Charles and Grizzell Apthorp were the parents of eleven sons and seven daughters, all born at the family seat in Boston. The "Charles Apthorp Mansion," so-called, was an imposing brick building at the corner of King (now State) Street and Exchange Lane, which later, during the nineteenth century, was occupied by the Union Bank. According to Mrs. Morton, this dwelling was, about 1750, "the scene of every elegance."⁵ She particularly mentions the stately dome, the shield bearing the family coat of arms, and the velvet-curtained beds.⁶ Charles Apthorp, at his death, 18 November, 1758, was buried under King's Chapel, to which he was said to have given £5000.⁷ In the north wall of the church, above his tomb, stands an imposing marble tablet bearing a Latin inscription composed by his son. The inventory of his estate, made in 1759, gives the total value as £16,402, 14 s., 5 d., that of the real estate being £13,600. It is interesting to note that Long Island in Boston Harbor was included in this property. The mansion house on King Street was valued at £2300. His property was divided among his fifteen surviving children, his son James, Sarah's father, receiving a farm in Worcester and a wood-lot in the south precinct of Braintree, the total value being given as £590. James, the fourth child of Charles and Grizzell (Eastwicke) Apthorp, born in Boston, 17 November, 1731, married Sarah Wentworth, daughter of Samuel Wentworth, merchant of Boston, and granddaughter of Lieutenant-Governor John Wentworth of New Hampshire.

The Wentworths were a distinguished family of New Hampshire, related to the Earls of Strafford and descended from Elder

⁵M.M.I.T., p. 271, note 1.

⁶Ibid., p. 30.

⁷This is the sum which Mrs. Morton mentions in *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, p. 285, note 4. F. W. P. Greenwood, in *A History of King's Chapel*, p. 113, states that Charles Apthorp gave £1000 old tenor, or £100 sterling, having already given from £100 to £200 old tenor in an earlier subscription.

William Wentworth, a member of the parish of the Reverend John Wheelwright at Alford, England.⁸ He apparently migrated to New England at the same time with Wheelwright and Mrs. Anne Hutchinson. He first resided in Exeter, New Hampshire, later following Wheelwright to Wells, Maine, and finally removing to Dover, New Hampshire, where he passed the rest of his life. The records of his wife or wives are not very clear, but it seems fairly certain that his first wife was Elizabeth Kenny. His son Samuel, who married Mary Benning, moved in 1669 to Portsmouth, which remained the chief seat of the family.

Here John Wentworth was born, 16 January, 1671. He first entered upon a sea-faring life, becoming captain in 1708. After leaving the sea, he did considerable business as a merchant and held several public positions, as Counsellor, Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and finally Lieutenant-Governor of New Hampshire. At this time New Hampshire had only a lieutenant-governor resident, the governorship being the same with that of Massachusetts; but for five years (1723-28) between the governorships of Samuel Shute and William Burnet, Wentworth was in full charge of the Province. He retained his position until his death, at Portsmouth, 12 December, 1730. He seems to have been highly esteemed, in private life, in trade, and in public office.⁹ He acquired "by careful attention to his business," a handsome fortune, leaving, in his will, dated August, 1730, besides real estate, over £16,000 to his wife and children. Lieutenant-Governor Wentworth married, 12 October, 1693, Sarah, daughter of Mark Hunking, of Devonshire, England. She died 1 April, 1741, in her sixty-eighth year.

A later member of the family and kinsman of Sarah Wentworth Morton, Sir John Wentworth, baronet, was the last royal governor of the province of New Hampshire.¹⁰

⁸The following information concerning the Wentworth family is derived from the *Wentworth Genealogy*, by John W. Wentworth.

⁹Belknap's *History of New Hampshire*, quoted in the *Went. Gen.*, vol. 1, pp. 178-180, says of him: "He was a gentleman of good natural abilities, much improved by conversation; remarkably civil and kind to strangers; respectful to the ministers of the gospel; a lover of good men of all denominations; compassionate and bountiful to the poor; courteous and affable to all; having a constant regard to the duties of divine worship in private and public, and paying due deference to all the sacred institutions of Christ."

¹⁰Mrs. Morton's *Beacon Hill*, pp. 26-7, 54.

Samuel, son of John and Sarah (Hunking) Wentworth, born in Portsmouth, 15 January, 1708, was graduated from Harvard College at the age of twenty and settled in business in Boston. He was one of "fifty principal merchants of Boston" who petitioned the General Court, 19 December, 1760, and was at one time a warden of King's Chapel. He married, 17 October, 1732, Elizabeth Deering, born 20 November, 1715, daughter of Henry and Elizabeth (Packer) Deering.¹¹ Samuel Wentworth died 16 September, 1766, and his widow passed her last days with her son Benning. She died in London, 6 April, 1785, and was buried at Prince James's Church, Piccadilly.

Sarah, their daughter, was born 19 December, 1735, and was baptized at the New Brick Church, in Hanover Street, Boston, 28 December. Her marriage to James Apthorp took place on Sunday, 20 July, 1755, at King's Chapel, the Reverend Henry Caner being the officiating clergyman.

James and Sarah (Wentworth) Apthorp, after their marriage, lived in Boston, probably at the Apthorp mansion on King Street, until after 1767, since their children born during this period were regularly baptized at King's Chapel. He was then engaged, like his father, in merchandising. An undated letter at the Massachusetts Historical Society Library gives some indication as to the nature of his business.¹² In it he informs James and Joseph Otis, of Barnstable, that certain quantities and sorts of fish are required for shipment to the West Indies on a vessel then expected in Providence.

Between 1768 and 1770 the family removed to Braintree, where James had inherited some property from his father. On their Braintree estate the Apthorps spent most of the remainder of their lives, and here their children were brought up in pleasant rural surroundings. Mrs. Morton in old age referred with particular affection to a tall tulip tree which overshadowed her early home.¹³ James Apthorp appears in Braintree records with the title "Esquire," perhaps indicating that he held some minor official appointment, and was apparently a respected citizen of the town. He

¹¹Wentworth Genealogy, vol. 1, p.

¹²Otis Papers, Mass. Hist. Soc. Library.

¹³"Lines to the Scion of the Tulip Tree, Shading the Rural Home of My Ancestors," in *M.M.I.T.*, pp. 134-5.

was a man of education and culture, who corresponded with and assisted the historian Belknap in his researches, as is shown by correspondence still extant.¹⁴

At the beginning of the Revolution, however, Apthorp's popularity in Braintree, one of the most active seats of rebellion, was for a time shadowed by his feeling of loyalty for the mother country. Both the Wentworths and the Apthorps were mainly Loyalists in their sympathies; one son was serving in the royal army and another in the navy; and a brother, Thomas Apthorp, paymaster of the British forces in Boston, was proscribed and deprived of his estate, including the mansion in King Street. James and Sarah, formerly members of King's Chapel in Boston, had continued actively helpful in the Episcopalian parish at Braintree. This connection with Christ Church, generally regarded as a hotbed of Toryism, brought them under suspicion of disloyalty to the colony. The congregation continued the prayers for the King, and the doors of the church were finally closed. James Apthorp's name was presented by the selectmen of Braintree at a town meeting on 9 June, 1777, in a list of persons "all which," in the words of the town record, "was voted by the Town to be persons esteemed inimical" to the cause of the colonies.¹⁵ A citizen was appointed to procure evidence of the disloyalty of these persons and lay it before the court, but no record of further action has been found. The historian of Braintree remarks:¹⁶

Against the other members of the society [except Samuel Quincy and the Reverend Edward Winslow] proceedings do not seem to have been pressed, and afterwards they all became good citizens of the United States, their names again appearing in the Braintree and Quincy records, and, at last, on the stones in the little Episcopal graveyard. Later a certain amount of property in Braintree was seized and sold because of Tory ownership, but it belonged chiefly to non-residents. Thus the Tory persecution in Braintree, though it unquestionably made the lives of those suspected miserable enough at the time, seems, so far as actual residents in the town were concerned, to have resulted only in the expatriation of Sam-

¹⁴Belknap MSS, Mass. Hist. Soc. Library.

¹⁵Records of the Town of Braintree, 1640-1793, edited by Samuel A. Bates, pp. 481-2. Also see Pattee, *Old Braintree and Quincy*, p. 416.

¹⁶Adams, C. F., *History of Braintree, Mass.*, pp. 230-1.

uel Quincy and the Reverend Edward Winslow. The other suspects, quietly accepting the situation, made the best of it; and, as is not unusual in such cases, found it in the close far less unendurable than, doubtless, they had gloomily anticipated.

In view of the ardent patriotism expressed in Mrs. Morton's poems and of her marriage not long after to a prominent young Revolutionary leader, it would seem improbable that the suspicions regarding James Apthorp's loyalty were very well founded. The temporary estrangement from his neighbors, however, may explain why so few references to him can be found in the local records. Practically the only occasions when we hear from him are those on which he signed petitions. His and his mother's (Grizzell Apthorp's) names were among the signers of a communication dated Boston, 16 November, 1787. This was a protest against selling pews in the Stone Chapel [King's Chapel] to persons who were not Episcopalians, against introducing a different liturgy and making various other changes, and particularly against retaining James Freeman, a Unitarian, as the minister of the church.¹⁷ James Apthorp also signed, in 1791, a petition to the General Court for an act of incorporation of various parts of Dorchester, Braintree, Knight's Neck, etc.¹⁸ He died eight years later, 10 November, 1799, and was interred in the family vault under King's Chapel, in Boston, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Parker, rector of Trinity Church, Boston, delivering the funeral sermon.¹⁹ His widow survived him by more than twenty years.

The brothers and sisters of James Apthorp were, in nearly all cases, persons of prominence and made distinguished marriages. Of the daughters, Grizzell, the eldest, married Barlow Trecothick, who became Lord Mayor of London. Susan, the second, married Dr. Thomas Bulfinch of Boston, an eminent physician and father of Charles Bulfinch, the architect. Anne married Nathaniel Wheelwright. Charles Ward and John were distinguished merchants with connections in England and elsewhere in this country. The Reverend East Apthorp, the fourth brother, was educated at Cambridge University and was for a

¹⁷*Diary of William Bentley*, vol. 1, p. 84.

¹⁸Pattee, p. 60.

¹⁹*Wentworth Genealogy*, vol. 1, pp. 519-20.

number of years rector of the Episcopal Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His wife was niece of Governor Thomas Hutchinson of the Massachusetts Colony. Another brother, Thomas, succeeded his father as paymaster of the British forces in Boston from 1758 to 1776. Both East and Thomas removed to England at the time of the Revolution and died there.

The children of James and Sarah Apthorp, brothers and sisters of Mrs. Morton, born between 1756 and 1775, were ten in number. The first seven were born in Boston and baptized at King's Chapel; the last three were born in Braintree.²⁰

The oldest, Grizzell, baptized 2 November, 1756, married Thomas Hawkshaw, a captain in the British army, and died 3 September, 1799, childless. She was evidently somewhat of a poetess, since an "Ode to Contentment" by her was printed in the *Farmer's Weekly Museum* on 28 November, 1794.²¹ The second child, Sarah, lived only a short time after her baptism, 26 July, 1758. The next, also christened Sarah, is the subject of this sketch.

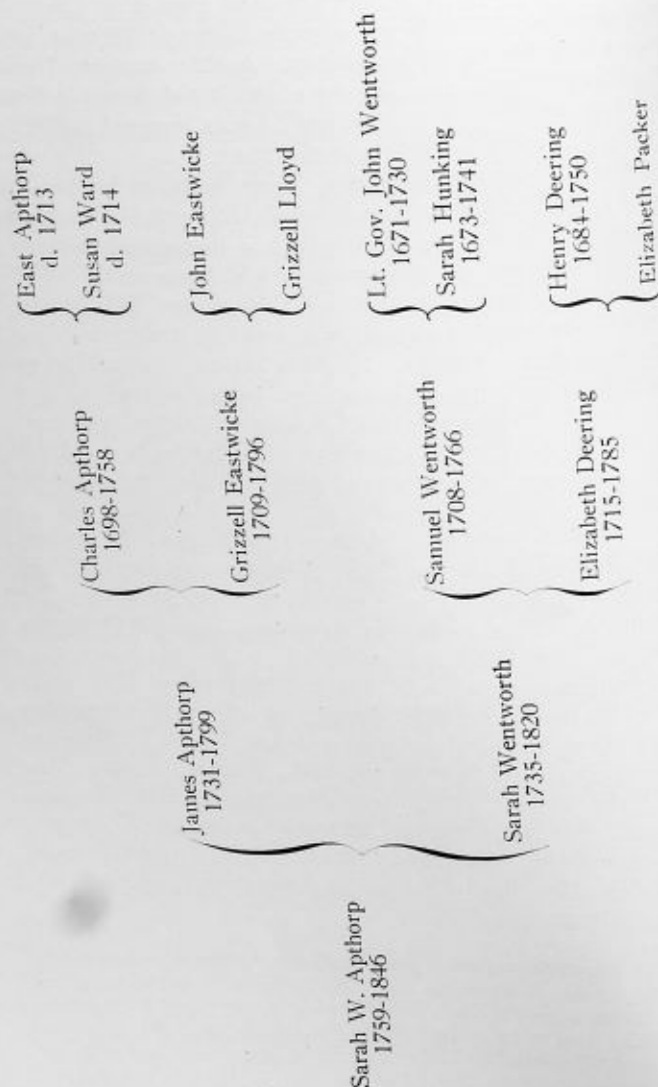
The oldest son, Charles Apthorp, was baptized 17 January, 1761. He became a captain in the British navy; married Mary, daughter of John Prince and sister of the Hon. John Prince, of Roxbury, Mass.; and after the Revolution returned to Boston, where he died in 1804, leaving children.

Elizabeth, the next child, baptized 18 January, 1763, never married but lived at Braintree, later Quincy, first with her brother George Henry Apthorp and later with her sister, Mrs. Morton. She died at Quincy, 18 February, 1845. Frances Theodora Apthorp,²² the "Ophelia" of the novel *The Power of Sympathy*, was baptized 7 July, 1766, and died unmarried in Boston, 28 August, 1788. Lucy Ann, baptized 18 December, 1767, married first, 24 September, 1785, Richard Nash, a Cornishman, and second, George Winbolt.

²⁰The information regarding James Apthorp's children is derived mainly from the *Wentworth Genealogy*, vol. 1, p. 520 ff. and from the records of King's Chapel at the Old Court House, Boston.

²¹Copied from an earlier issue of the *Federal Orrery*, of Boston.

²²Called "Theodosia" by Walter Littlefield in the notes to his edition of *The Power of Sympathy*, 1894. Her full name is signed to a letter preserved at the Mass. Hist. Soc. Library as Francis [sic] Theodora Apthorp.



Ancestry of Sarah Apthorp Morton

George Henry Apthorp, the first of the children born after the removal to Braintree, was baptized there 5 October, 1770. He married in London, 22 July, 1797, his cousin Anna, daughter of Dr. William Lee and Elizabeth (Wentworth) Perkins, born at Doncaster, England, 15 August, 1778. Their children were all born in Quincy, where he succeeded his father as head of the Braintree-Quincy branch of the family. He died there 30 January, 1825, and is buried in a tomb in the southwest corner of Christ Church. His widow died in Quincy, 27 July, 1825.

Charlotte, baptized 1 August, 1773, died in 1796, unmarried. Paul Wentworth, the youngest child, was born 4 July, 1775, and baptized 25 November, 1775, his sponsors being his Excellency, Governor John Wentworth, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Paul Wentworth, Esq., of London. He died 19 March, 1778.

The third child of this family, named Sarah after her mother, Sarah (Wentworth) Apthorp, was born in Boston and baptized at King's Chapel on 29 August, 1759.²³ Before her marriage, as noted above, she assumed also her mother's maiden name, calling herself Sarah Wentworth Apthorp,²⁴ one of the earlier manifestations of her characteristic family pride. Her early childhood was spent in Boston but about her tenth year she was taken with the family to Braintree.

This village, in which she was to grow up to womanhood, was a small country town on the road from Plymouth to Boston, to which it was near enough for frequent intercourse along the circuitous route which then followed Boston Neck into the town. As the seat of the Adams, Quincy, and Hancock families, it enjoyed an unusual degree of social and political prominence; and with the Adamses, at least, the Apthorps were on friendly terms. From Mrs. Morton's works it is clear that she received an unusual education for a girl of her time and that her reading was extensive and well guided. The library in her father's house at the time of the inventory of his estate in 1800 was valued at \$150; and that of her brother, George Henry Apthorp, included, at the time of his death, 1825, over 1100 volumes. A later poem of hers, "To Pollio," published in the *Massachusetts Magazine* in

²³Records of King's Chapel Baptisms, 1703-1824, Old Court House, Boston. Nearly all accounts give her birthplace erroneously as Braintree.

²⁴Noble, John, *op. cit.*

January, 1793, apparently addressed to John Trumbull, the painter, would indicate that her reading was partly directed by him at this early period:

She whose first dawn of life you knew
When on that voice instruction grew,
When ev'ry word a moral taught,
And kindness smooth'd the pointed thought
She sees her early friend restor'd
With ev'ry worth her youth ador'd,
Sees thee unlike the marble race
Who shun affliction's alter'd face,
Still thy benignant accent hears,
Still finds that truth her soul reverts.

From girlhood Sarah Apthorp was distinguished by remarkable beauty and sweetness of disposition, which won her a large number of friends. She probably developed early in life the habit of devoting frequently hours not required for household tasks to setting down her thoughts in prose or verse form.²⁵ Before her marriage, she had thus gained "something more than a local reputation as a maker of rhymes."²⁶ Perhaps the earliest extant piece of her poetry is "Lines to the Breath of Kindness," included in *My Mind and Its Thoughts* as "childish lines. . . not then seen by the individual to whom they were inscribed in very early youth."²⁷ Though the poem has doubtless undergone revision, the youthful sentiments and the stiff tetrameter couplets are characteristic of an early style.

LINES

To The Breath of Kindness.

The following lines being, as their style imports, a production of early youth, are here inserted, not surely for poetic merit, but rather for the grateful sentiment at that period felt, uttered, and inscribed.

To The Kindest of The Kind.

²⁵See *M.M.I.T.*, Introduction, p. xvi.

²⁶Walter Littlefield, introduction to *The Power of Sympathy*, p. x.

²⁷*M.M.I.T.*, note, p. 272. The poem appears on pp. 32-33.

Sweet is the garden's breeze that flows,
With health and sweetness from the rose;
Charm'd was the strain CECILIA knew,
And with enrapturing finger drew;
So sweet the breath which kindness moves,
So charms the voice attention loves:
She, with the organ's lifted peal,
Could make a listening Angel feel,
With floating wing from heaven descend,
And o'er her fine attractions bend,
To thee a finer strain is given,
A strain that wins the heart to heaven.

What time the breath of kindness steals
O'er every pang that sorrow feels;
With all affection's hoarded stores,
How rich the balmy whisper pours,
Rich as the spring's first blossom blows,
Warm as the lip of summer glows;
Sweet as the morning's clovered vale,
And healthful as its zephyr'd gale,
More prized than wealth; than worlds more dear;
Still may THAT WHISPER loiter near;
Still to this trusting heart reveal,
What only thou—LOVED FRIEND! can'st feel.

A tribute to her younger brother, "To George Henry Apthorp,"²⁸ in similar meter and spirit, probably belongs to the same early period.

Sarah Apthorp was not sixteen at the beginning of the Revolution, at which time the activities of John Adams and other Braintree neighbors must have made the life of the community an exciting and eventful one. The nearness to her grandmother's house in Boston also allowed frequent visits to the town both before and after the outbreak of hostilities. On such visits it doubtless was that she became acquainted with a brilliant young Harvard graduate who was establishing a reputation for himself as a shrewd lawyer and able orator and an active political leader closely associated with her fellow townsmen Adams and Hancock in the discussion and reorganization of the times. This was Perez Morton, son of Joseph and Anna (Bullock) Morton, born at Plymouth,

²⁸*M.M.I.T.*, pp. 27-28.

Massachusetts, 2 November, 1750.²⁹ His father, Joseph Morton, removed before 1760 from Plymouth to Boston, where he was proprietor and keeper of the celebrated White Horse Tavern. Here the boy Perez often overheard heated discussions of royal and provincial policy. At the age of ten he entered the Boston Latin School and eleven years later, in 1771, was graduated from Harvard, after which he entered upon the study of law. He was admitted to the Massachusetts bar as an attorney, 27 July, 1774. His public service, in government and politics, began a year later, when he became, in 1775, a member of the Committee of Safety, and a few months afterward of the Committee of Correspondence. In April of the following year, he attracted a good deal of attention by his funeral address on General Joseph Warren. Ten months after the battle of Bunker Hill, the body of Warren had been disinterred and identified. The Masonic order, of which Warren and Morton were conspicuous members, at once made arrangements for a public funeral, which was held in King's Chapel, on 8 April, 1776. It was a distinguished honor for young Morton to be selected to deliver the chief address on the occasion. Mrs. John Adams, who attended the funeral, referred to the "oration by Mr. Morton, which I hope will be printed. I think the subject must have inspired him. A young fellow could not have wished a finer opportunity to display his talents."³⁰ His apostrophe to the remains of Warren:

Illustrious relics! What tidings from the grave? Why hast thou left the peaceful mansions of the tomb, to visit again this troubled earth?

²⁹This sketch of Perez Morton's life and activities is derived from the following sources: Allen, John Kermott: *George Morton of Plymouth Colony and Some of his Descendants*, pp. 21-23; Clapp, David: "The Old Morton and Taylor Estates in Dorchester," *N. E. Hist. and Gen. Reg.*, vol. XLVI, pp. 78-84; Leach, Josiah G.: *Morton Memoranda*, p. 30; Loring, James S.: *The Hundred Boston Orators*, pp. 129-30; *Wentworth Genealogies*, vol. I, p. 521, note; *Publications of the Colonial Society of Mass.*, (Transactions, 1897-8), vol. V, pp. 282-293. In the last-named, Morton's birth date is given as above, i.e., 2 November (Old Style, 22 October), 1750; in other accounts the year is often given as 1751.

³⁰Letter to John Adams, 10 April, 1776. Quoted in *Letters of Mrs. John Adams*, Boston, 1840.

though it may sound affected to modern readers, profoundly stirred his auditors.³¹

During the next few years, while building up his legal practice, Perez Morton held many significant and important appointments, perhaps the most responsible of which was that of Deputy Secretary of the Council of Massachusetts, in which capacity he corresponded extensively with General Washington and other Revolutionary leaders. He was repeatedly elected to the Committee of Correspondence from Boston and committees for instructing the Boston delegates to the General Court.³² At the town meeting on 18 December, he acted as temporary moderator.

Perez Morton is described as ardent and eloquent, of an elegant figure and polished manners.³³ His wife refers to his soul-illuminated eyes and to the effect on other women which his appearance created.³⁴

Sarah Apthorp and Perez Morton were married at Trinity Church, Boston, on 24 February, 1781.³⁵ Where they lived in Boston immediately after marriage is not certainly known. It is likely that they went directly to the Charles Apthorp mansion on State Street. As the property of a Loyalist expatriate, it was subject to confiscation; and three years later, 31 May and 24 November, 1784, Perez Morton purchased the rights of Charles Ward Apthorp, of New York, and Thomas Apthorp, of London, late of Boston, to the property.³⁶ Thus Mrs. Morton became mistress in the ancestral mansion, of which she was so proud and which held for her so many memories of elaborate entertainments and distinguished guests—

The feast, the dance, the song of glee.³⁷

³¹Quoted in Loring, J. S., *The Hundred Boston Orators*, pp. 129-30.

³²Boston Town Records, 1770-1798, vols. 18, 26, 31, 35, *passim*.

³³Loring: *op. cit.*, p. 130.

³⁴*M.M.I.T.*, pp. 182-3.

³⁵Trinity Church Records, Old Court House, Boston. Littlefield, "Introduction," p. x, *To the Power of Sympathy*, 1894, gives this date erroneously as 1771.

³⁶Suffolk County Registry of Deeds.

³⁷"To the Mansion of My Ancestors," in *M.M.I.T.*, p. 30, line 11.

CHAPTER II

A LADY OF BOSTON

1781-1789

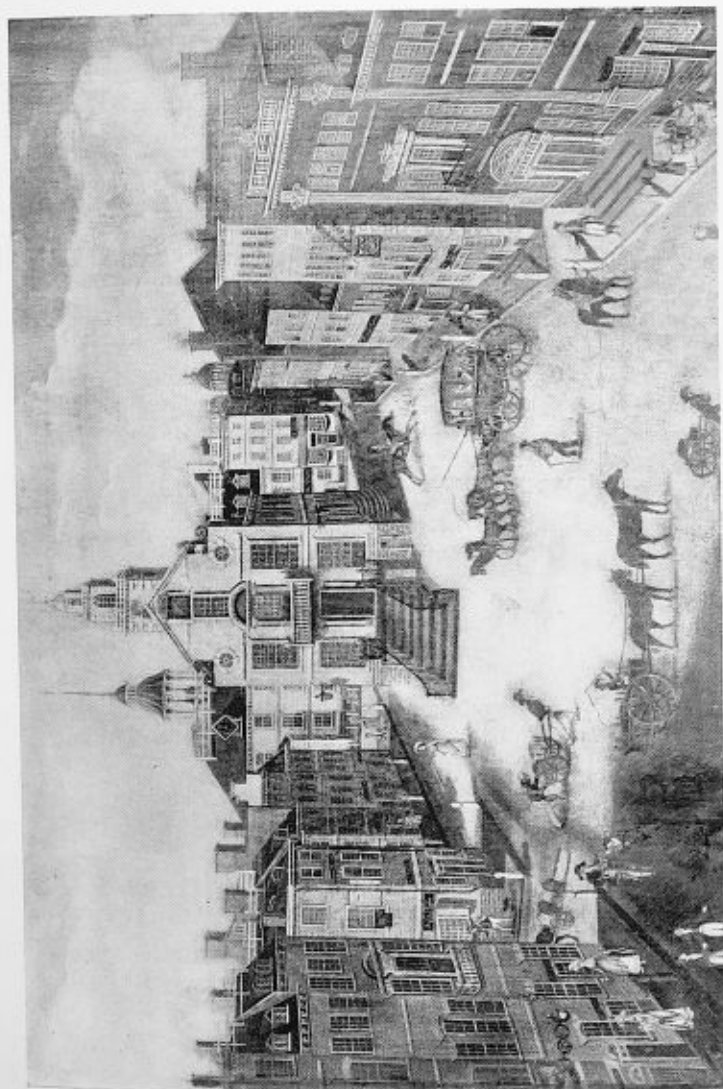
Although her husband probably was unable to maintain the same degree of opulence at the State Street mansion as her grandfather and her uncle while they were paymasters of the King's Forces, the circumstances of her early married life must have seemed to Mrs. Morton particularly auspicious. She was restored to the house which she associated with treasured memories. Her husband was a brilliant and rising attorney, and her own beauty and graceful charm enabled her to maintain the social position to which his dignities entitled him. The certainty of the success of the Revolution, with its resulting increase of security and the possibility of reunion with her brothers in the British service, must also have been gratifying to her.

Probably during the first year of their married life, the Mortons made their journey to the national capital at Philadelphia, to which she refers in "Philadelphia; an Elegy."¹ It is likely that Perez made the trip on official business as an agent of the State, since they were entertained with hospitality by Robert Morris, the great financier of the Revolution.

Mrs. Morton's first two children, Sarah and Anna Louisa, were born 2 June, 1782, and 19 December, 1783. The older, named for her mother, married Richard Cunningham, a clergyman, in 1809, and died two years before Mrs. Morton, in 1844. Anna Louisa Morton never married.

Among the old and new friends of the Mortons during their residence in Boston were the families of John Adams, Governor James Bowdoin, General Henry Knox, General Benjamin Lincoln, Colonel James Swan, Harrison Gray Otis, Dr. John Warren, and James and Mercy Warren. A near neighbor on State Street was the venerable and prosperous watchmaker, Gawen Brown, whose talented youngest son, William Hill, was beginning his career as a writer, destined later to come into rather unpleasant relationship with the Mortons.

¹M.M.I.T., pp. 79-82.



STATE STREET, BOSTON, IN 1801
From a painting in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society
(The Apthorp-Morton Mansion is the second on the right, before which a horse is tied)

An interesting painting of the westerly end of State Street, preserved in the Massachusetts Historical Society Library, shows the Apthorp-Morton mansion as it looked in 1801, shortly after their occupancy. The buildings, standing close together, give an appearance of snug prosperity. Directly across Exchange Lane stood at that date the Coffee House of Israel Hatch, from which the New York stage was accustomed to set out.²

During the winter of 1784-5, in an attempt to enliven fashionable society in the town, Mr. and Mrs. Morton joined with a number of the younger families, including the Swans, Dr. Smith, Oliver Brewster, Harrison Gray Otis, Isaac Winslow, Samuel Jarvis, and others, in what they called a "Tea Assembly." Under the unofficial name of the Sans Souci Club, they met at the Concert Hall for dancing and card playing. Membership was limited by subscription, the hall was closed at midnight, and the amount of wagers on card games was definitely limited to a quarter of a dollar. In spite of these precautions, however, the members of the club were attacked for promoting luxury of living, extravagance, and freedom of manners. The chief criticism appeared in a series of articles over the signature "Observer" in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, beginning 15 January, 1785, which urged that the assemblies be broken up, by force if necessary. The author is supposed to have been Samuel Adams. This attack provoked a discussion which continued in the *Centinel*, the *Independent Chronicle*, and the *American Herald* throughout the month, Harrison Gray Otis and others defending the club and Benjamin Austin, Junior, taking the side of "Observer." Mrs. Mercy Warren, who had attended some of the assemblies, apparently assumed a somewhat neutral position. The attackers were doubtless sincere in the belief that in the period of financial depression and uncertainty at the close of the war, anything like fashionable excess and gambling should be discouraged.

The chief outcome of the controversy, besides the abandonment of the assemblies, was the publication of a dull and tedious farcical satire, *Sans Souci, alias, Free and Easy:—Or, an Evening's Peep in a Polite Circle. An entirely new entertainment, in three Acts*, printed by Warden and Russell during the latter part of

²*Log Book of the State Street Trust Company*, 1926, p. 50. The painting referred to is reproduced on page 4.

January. This had considerable sale and was reprinted at least once in spite of its lack of literary qualities and of dramatic action. In the Boston Athenaeum copy, pencilled notes indicate that the characters Mr. Importance and Madam Importance are supposed to represent Perez and Sarah Morton.

Consisting of a series of satirical conversations, with no dramatic action, this farce is stiff and lifeless. It brings out chiefly the rules of the society and emphasizes the pomposity of the members, particularly that of Mr. and Madam Importance. In Scene II of Act I, the latter expresses to Madam Brilliant^a her pleasure that the dresses are very elaborate, saying

This will serve to sift down families and will be the most effectual means to establish a precedence. We have for a long while been too much on a level.

She continues by stating that those who are unable to keep up

will be obliged to resign their pretensions to high life, and leave a few of us to enjoy the field.

Mr. Importance, as well as his wife, is portrayed as being snobbish. He is glad that the tables are reserved, "as distinctions in all companies are necessary."⁴ He believes in the establishment of definite rules of etiquette and mentions with approbation "the court stile [sic] of taste and fashion."⁵

Scene III of Act III shows a party of four at cards, Madam Importance and Madam Brilliant being the two ladies. They are hurrying to finish their game before twelve, the hour for closing the club room.

Though the author of this skit may have written it partly to inform outsiders of the regulations of the club, his main purpose seems to have been to satirize the society as a whole and the individual members. Herein lies its only interest.

The Mortons were members of King's Chapel, where the Apthorps for several generations had worshiped and where Perez,

^aMadam Brilliant is identified in the Athenaeum copy as Mrs. James Swan.

⁴Act I, Scene II.

⁵Act III, Scene I.

from 1783 on, was a vestryman. In 1785 he was one of the proprietors, the family pew being Number Four. It is interesting to find that he was a member of the committee of laymen which, in conjunction with the pastor, the Reverend James Freeman, revised the liturgy of the church in 1785 to fit needs of a republican congregation. Their action in omitting any reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, protested by James Apthorp and a number of the Anglican members, is recognized as an important landmark in the New England Unitarian movement.

Mrs. Morton's third child, Frances Wentworth, was born 6 February, 1785; and the next year her only son to survive birth, Charles Ward Apthorp Morton, on 15 August. Her youngest daughter, Charlotte, was born 30 September, 1787. Mrs. Morton was extremely happy in her five children and possibly inordinately proud of them. Her especial favorites seem to have been her only son, Charles, and Charlotte, a girl of great beauty. Her early loss of these two made their recollection doubtless the dearer to her in old age. Charlotte, at the age of fifteen, she describes thus:⁶

...a Beauty more brilliant—and a temper more celestial—and a mind more enriched by Talents and by Virtues, had never met observation, nor inspired affection.

A complexion of the most delicate bloom, large dark eyes of enchanting blue, long ringlets of flaxen gold, in which no taint of the auburn nor approach to the red were seen, a smile seemingly of itself perfect beauty—an ivory neck and shoulder, in symmetry a model for sculpture—sweetness, softness, elegance—a musician, a painter, a poet.

A letter of Charlotte's in the stiff and decorous manner of the eighteenth century is preserved in the *Knox Papers*.⁷ In it she writes of the doings of the Otises, Winthrops, Bowdoin, and Swans and expresses her hope of seeing Mrs. Knox and her daughter in Boston during the coming winter. Mrs. Morton's son Charles was almost equally handsome and possessed, according to his mother, of an intellect of great brilliance.

⁶*M.M.I.T.*, p. 282.

⁷Letter to Mrs. Knox, 15 August, 1806, *Knox Papers*, in the Mass. Hist. Soc. Library.

The happiness of Mrs. Morton's home life was marred in the summer of 1788 by a most distressing domestic tragedy. As nearly as the story can be pieced together from several sources,⁸ it is substantially the following. About a year or two earlier, her younger sister, Frances Theodora Apthorp, familiarly called Fanny by her family and friends, then about twenty years old, came to visit the Mortons in Boston. She was, like Mrs. Morton, a girl of great personal beauty and was of an affectionate and pliable disposition. On this occasion, apparently, her brother-in-law was struck with her charms and induced her to remain in his household.⁹ Morton must have been a man of attractive personality, and in at least two sources it is intimated that more than one woman was deeply interested in him.¹⁰

At any rate, all accounts agree that Fanny Apthorp readily yielded to her brother-in-law's advances, and that they maintained clandestine relations in the Morton house for some time. About the end of 1787, she became the mother of a female child, who was taken to Weston, about fifteen miles from Boston, and there brought up.¹¹

After this, apparently confident of safety from detection, Fanny Apthorp would seem to have returned to her sister's house and resumed her former relations with Morton.¹²

⁸Namely, contemporary records and newspaper items; the "Ophelia" episode in the novel *The Power of Sympathy* (Walter Littlefield's reprint, 1894, pages 83-101); Littlefield's introduction and notes; Littlefield and Brayley's introduction to the novel as reprinted in *The Bostonian*, Vol. 1, 19-23; A. W. Brayley's "The Real Author of *The Power of Sympathy*," *Bostonian*, Vol. 1, pp. 224-233, based upon information furnished by Mrs. Rebecca Vollintine Thompson in 1894; Frances Apthorp's letters; and a contemporary satirical pamphlet called *Occurrences of the Times*. If it be frankly admitted that the second of these sources is avowedly fiction; that the third, fourth, and fifth are inaccurate in some details; that the sixth was written under great emotional strain; and that the seventh was prompted by malice against the chief parties concerned; still the general agreement of all as to the chief details forms a fairly credible basis for the entire story.

⁹*The Power of Sympathy*, Letter XXI, Harriot to Myra.

¹⁰See stanzas I-III of "Stanzas to a Recently United Husband," quoted on pages 36-37 below, and the remarks of Martha in *Occurrences of the Times*.

¹¹Fanny Apthorp MS.; *Occurrences*; Brayley, "The Real Author of *The Power of Sympathy*."

¹²Brayley, "The Real Author."

... No longer by vain fear, or shame control'd
In guilty amours, grown securely bold,
Mocking rebuke, they brave it in our streets,
And even at noon, his mistress meets.
So public in their crimes, so daring grown,
They almost take a pride to have them known."¹³

At length her guilt was revealed to her father, who, as was natural, was greatly angered at his wayward daughter and at her alleged seducer, his son-in-law. Morton's affection now was turned to dislike,¹⁴ and he seems to have desired to clear himself by denying any responsibility for Fanny's plight or by throwing blame for it upon her.¹⁵ She, on her part, maintained her "guilty innocence," protested that Morton was the only man who had ever had her love, and besought the forgiveness of her parents and the sister she had wronged.¹⁶

The father, incensed by the conflicting assertions of his daughter and denials of Morton, demanded a sort of family council at which she and her supposed seducer should confront each other.¹⁷ All the parties concerned shrank from such a meeting, but the father was obdurate. As August of 1788 wore on, Fanny became more and more agitated, unwell, and despondent. During this period of distress Mrs. Morton is said to have cared for her loyally and tenderly,¹⁸ and Fanny felt increasingly guilty of wrongdoing toward her.¹⁹

At length a date, toward the end of August, was set for the dreaded "court of justice," as Fanny called it. As the time approached, she set down her thoughts in a somewhat incoherent, half-diary, half-letter form, partly addressed to Morton,²⁰ in which she expressed her fear of condemnation and her hope of death as her only relief. In the diary entry of Wednesday, 27 August, she speaks quite firmly of her intention to die, writing

¹³These verses appeared on the title page of *Occurrences*.

¹⁴MS.; *P. of S.*, Letter XXI, Harriot to Myra.

¹⁵MS.; *Occurrences*; *Massachusetts Centinel*, 8 October, 1788; *P. of S.*

¹⁶MS.; *P. of S.*

¹⁷MS.; *P. of S.*

¹⁸Brayley, "Editor's Preface."

¹⁹MS.

²⁰Preserved in the Mass. Hist. Soc. Library.

I have felt from the first that this matter would go against me, but I have resolved never to live after it has.

She also pleads for the forgiveness and pity of her family, particularly that of the sister whom she has injured.

By some means she secured poison; and on Thursday, 28 August, the fatal step was taken. The next issue of the *Massachusetts Gazette* published this simple notice in the column of deaths:

On Thursday the 28th ult. Miss Frances Theodora Apthorp.

This tragic solution changed the entire situation. James Apthorp, and later his wife, called at the Morton home, but were apparently not welcomed.²¹ The necessary coroner's inquest was held; and while the records are not extant, the verdict was that Frances Apthorp had met her death by deliberate suicide, Morton being implicated.²²

Definitely faced by public scandal, both the Mortons and the Apthorps turned to efforts to avert calumny from the memory of Fanny and the reputation of Morton. From among the numerous and influential friends of the two families, John Adams and James Bowdoin, former governor of the state, were selected as mediators. The outcome of their investigation and deliberation was published in the *Massachusetts Centinel* on 8 October, 1788:

We are happy in being able to announce to the publick, that the accusations brought against a fellow citizen, in consequence of a late unhappy event, and which have been the cause of so much domestic calamity, and publick speculation, have, at the mutual desire of the parties, been submitted to, and fully inquired into by their Excellencies JAMES BOWDOIN, and JOHN ADAMS, Esq's, and that the results of their inquiry is, that the said accusations are not, in any degree, supported, and that therefore there is just ground for the restoration of peace and harmony between them; and in consequence thereof, they have recommended to them, with the spirit of candour

²¹See a poem and the response in *Massachusetts Centinel* for 27 September and 4 August, 1788. The poem is quoted by Martha in *Occurrences*, indicating Mrs. Morton's authorship.

²²See *Herald of Freedom*, Thursday, 9 October, and Monday, 13 October, 1788.

and mutual condescension, again to embrace in friendship and affection.

We would add, that were it not for the verdict of the jury of inquest to the contrary (for verdicts must always be respected) it would have been the wish of many, that the extraordinary conduct of the deceased, had been early attributed to the only accountable cause, an insane state of mind.

This decision, both because it calmly set aside the verdict of a coroner's jury and because it seemed so palpable an attempt to exculpate a prominent lawyer and a misguided girl, produced many heated and sarcastic comments, especially in the opposition *Herald of Freedom*.²³ Much of the acrimony, such as that expressed in the couplet²⁴

*But blast the villain, though to altars fled,
Who robs the living and insults the dead.*

was doubtless due to Morton's political activities in alliance with the minority party.

So far as can be ascertained at this distance in time, Mrs. Morton seems to have sided with her husband and her distressed sister and to have regretted her father's course of action. There is reason to believe that a poem in the *Centinel*, Saturday, 27 September, may have been written by her.²⁵ This poem, and the editor's prefatory remarks follow:

The following appears to be written warm from the heart, and true to all its fires...The occurrences which suggested the ideas are perhaps better conceived than related...The feeling heart cannot but commiserate the exquisite sensations on which the energetick complaint is founded.

Where is the father fled, with raptur'd breast!
Where the fond mother, in her offspring blest!
Ah wretched child! no friends thy grief controul,
No melting parent soothes thy anguish'd soul;
No father's cares the bolts of fate defy,
No mother's fondness wipes thy streaming eye:

²³9 and 13 October.

²⁴Thursday, 16 October.

²⁵A servant, Martha, in *Occurrences of the Times* (see below), says that "Mrs. Sidney" [Mrs. Morton] was the author.

But lost in grief, that loathes the tedious day,
 The hapless sufferer mourns her life away.
 What powers of †ATE could a parent move
 To blast the child who claim'd his tendered love!
 Relenting stop! nor urge thy swelling rage
 To crush the prop that rais'd thy sinking age;
 Let pity's balm o'er reckless hatred flow,
 And spare the helpless family of woe—
 The lovely offspring from dishonour save,
 And wrest thy drooping daughter from the grave.

†The Goddess of Revenge.²⁶

Several times in her poems and notes, Mrs. Morton refers to a time of grief and of mental distress during which she suffered from the curiosity or scorn of some of her associates, which was probably this period.²⁷ Her attitude toward her sister was one of forgiveness and kindness; and there appears no trace of bitterness then or thereafter toward her husband. Three consecutive pieces in her late collection, *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, are an essay on "Marriage," a poem, "Stanzas to a Recently United Husband," and another poem, "Conciliation."²⁸ They seem to date from this episode. The first-named poem reflects her sentiment—her confidence in the power of her own constancy:

STANZAS

To a recently united husband.

In vain, upon that hand reclined,
 I call each plighted worth my own,
 Or rising to thy sovereign mind,
 Say that it reigns for me alone.

²⁶To this poem an unknown correspondent replied in the *Centinel* in the following week, 4 October:

To the Printer,

Sir—The pompous verses in your last Saturday's paper, which should have had ATE for their signature, are destitute of the great essential TRUTH—which does not 'vindicate the line'. How can parents soothe or console, when one is forbidden the house with exclamation, and the other drove from it with opprobrious language, when maternal affection was the sole cause of the visit?

²⁷See, for example, the lines "To Pollio" below, beginning of Chapter IV. pp. 179-181, 182-3, and 183-4, respectively.

Since, subject to its ardent sway,
 How many hearts were left to weep,
 To find the granted wish decay,
 And the triumphant passion sleep?

Such were, of love the transient flame,
 Which by the kindling senses led,
 To every new attraction came,
 And from the known endearment fled.

Unlike the gentle care that flows,
 With all the blest affections give,
 Unlike the generous hope that knows
 But for a kinder self to live.

Was theirs the tender glance to speak
 Timid, through many a sparkling tear,
 The ever changing hue of cheek,
 Its flush of joy—its chill of fear?

Or theirs the full expanded thought,
 By taste and moral sense refined—
 Each moment with instruction fraught,
 The tutored elegance of mind?

Be mine the sacred truth that dwells
 On ONE, by kindred virtues known,
 And mine, the chastened glance, which tells
 That sacred truth to HIM alone.

No sordid hope's insidious guise,
 No venal pleasure's serpent twine,
 Invite those soul-illuminated eyes,
 And blend this feeling heart with thine.

With the arrival in January of Charles Apthorp, brother of the dead girl, and a lieutenant in the British navy, further complications ensued. Laertes-like, he sought to avenge his family honor by challenging Morton to a duel. If current hostile opinion is justified, Morton met this dilemma by craft. He went at the appointed time to the appointed place, unarmed, but accompanied by two secretly armed companions, one a negro servant, and awaited assault by Apthorp, which under the circumstances was apparently not forthcoming. To make assurance doubly sure, Sheriff Anderson, of Suffolk County, was notified of the impending duel in time to avert any fatal termination.

This episode, fraught with ominous possibilities but ending thus ludicrously, occasioned a number of heated letters in the newspapers by advocates of both Morton and Apthorp.²⁹ The most amusing item was a fragment of dialogue, supposed to be the last scene of "a Farce lately acted in this Town," and "picked up in Cornhill, last Evening," which appeared in the *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 9 February, 1789. In this "Captain Arthorp" and "Mr. Merton" are represented as cowards, both eagerly awaiting the coming of the officers and relieved by their arrival. A more elaborate satire was a ribald and spiteful satirical skit, *Occurrences of the Times. Or, the Transactions of Four Days. A Farce. In two Acts*, separately published about the end of February, 1789. Perez Morton and his wife appear in this, as Mr. and Mrs. Sidney, in a very unfavorable light.³⁰

The most serious and disagreeable publicity in connection with the tragedy, however, was caused by the publication of a novel, *The Power of Sympathy: or the Triumph of Nature, Founded in Truth*, whose sole distinction is that of being the first work of its type produced in this country. This was published at Boston by Isaiah Thomas and Company in January, 1789, about five months after Fanny's death. The probable author was William Hill Brown, a close neighbor of the Mortons. During his short life from 1765 to 1793, he turned out at least one other novel, two plays, and a large number of poems, essays, and sentimental tales, one of which in the same month graced the first pages of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, also published by Isaiah Thomas and his partner, Ebenezer Andrews.³¹

The theme of the novel was the baleful effect of seduction; and it occurred to the young author to make capital of the two most striking recent instances, Fanny's suicide and the slightly earlier death of Elizabeth Whitman, at Danvers. Accordingly, he inserted in his epistolary romance an extended footnote about Miss Whitman and a series of letters paralleling in detail the story

²⁹See, for example, the *Herald of Freedom*, 3, 6, 10, and 13 Feb., and *Mass. Centinel*, 4, 7, 11, and 14 Feb., 1789.

³⁰A rather stupid typewritten note in the copy in the Harvard Library conjectures that Mrs. Morton was the author, despite the fact that the legitimacy of her youngest child is questioned in it.

³¹For a further discussion of the authorship, see below, pp. 109-12.

of Fanny and Morton, under the names of "Ophelia" and "Martin."³² For some days in advance it was known that the novel was in preparation,³³ but the Mortons were powerless to prevent it. On its publication, Mrs. Apthorp is said to have called on Elizabeth (Hill) Brown, William's mother, to protest. A bit of their conversation, as repeated long afterward by Brown's niece, was as follows:

"Oh, why did Willie do such a thing," she asked, "when we were such good friends?"

"The names are fictitious," Mrs. Brown assured her.

"But everyone knows whom he means," Mrs. Apthorp lamented."

When the novel actually appeared, about 21 January, it was found that a wholly unwarranted prominence had been given to the "Ophelia" episode by the use, as frontispiece for the first volume, of a graphic woodcut showing the dying agonies of the girl, with her parents rushing in to her aid, and the caption "O Fatal! Fatal Poison!" Under the circumstances the only thing the Mortons could do was to attempt to suppress the edition, which they are said to have succeeded in doing.³⁵ According to Buckingham, the novel "was no sooner announced as published, than an attempt was made to suppress it, by purchasing and destroying all the copies that could be found." Today, probably not more than a half dozen copies of the original edition survive.

Not long after the suicide of her unfortunate sister, Mrs. Morton suffered another saddening loss in the death of an infant son, born in April, 1789, who lived only eighteen hours. This bereavement the unhappy mother lamented in one of her best early poems, with the title "Memento, for My Infant who Lived but Eighteen Hours." The poem in full follows:³⁶

³²*Power of Sympathy*, Littlefield edition, pp. 83-103.

³³See an announcement in the *Herald of Freedom*, Boston, 16 January, 1789.

³⁴See *The Bostonian*, vol. 1, 1894, p. 232.

³⁵Buckingham, J. T., *Specimens of Newspaper Literature*, vol. 1, p. 323.

³⁶*M. M. I. T.*, pp. 255-6.

As the pure snow-drop, child of April tears,
Shook by the rough wind's desolating breath—
Scarce o'er the chilly sod its low head rears,
And trembling dies upon the parent heath.

So my lost boy, arrayed in fancy's charms,
Just born to mourn—with premature decay
To THE COLD TYRANT stretched his feeble arms,
And struggling sighed his little life away.

As not in vain the early snow-drop rose,
Though short its date, and hard the withering gale;
Since its pale bloom ethereal balm bestows,
And cheers with vernal hope the wasted vale.

My perished child, dear pledge of many a pain!
Torn from this ruffian world, in yon bright sphere,
Joins with awakened voice the cherub train,
And pours his sweet breath on a mother's ear.

Kind dreams of morn his fairy phantom bring,
And floating tones of extasy impart,
Soft as when Seraphs strike the heavenly string
To charm the settled sorrow of the heart.

CHAPTER III

PHILENIA: "OUÂBI" AND EARLY POEMS
1789-1793

According to Walter Littlefield,¹ followed by A. W. Brayley² and Miss Shuttles,³ Mrs. Morton had before her marriage contributed many poems to the *New England Magazine*. No magazine of this name is known to have existed during Mrs. Morton's early life. Moreover, Littlefield's remark that the magazine was "the first periodical published in America" rather discredits the value of his statement. A careful examination of the *Boston Magazine* (1783-1786) and of the earlier (1784) and later (1789-1790) series of the *Gentleman's and Lady's Town and Country Magazine* reveals several poems and prose articles which could have been her work; but the lack of signatures or other clues makes identification impossible.

The most successful of the eighteenth century magazines in New England was the *Massachusetts Magazine*, established at Boston by Isaiah Thomas and Benjamin Andrews in January, 1789, and continued, with one brief interruption, until 1796. In their first issue, the publishers invited the assistance and contributions of local poets and essayists, "whose future communications are earnestly requested." Possibly in response to this solicitation, Mrs. Morton sent to the magazine in early summer a lyric entitled "Invocation to Hope," receipt of which was acknowledged in the June number, in the following terms:

Constantia's Invocation to Hope, is animatedly elegant—we sincerely thank the unknown sentimentalist.

The poem as printed in the succeeding (July) issue was prefaced by these explanatory lines:⁴

¹"Editor's Introduction" to his edition of *The Power of Sympathy*, p. x.

²"Editor's Preface" to *The Power of Sympathy*, *The Bostonian*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Oct., 1894.

³Louise Gordon Shuttles, *Sarah Wentworth Morton, Her Life and Works* (Columbia University Master's thesis, 1928; unpublished).

⁴*Mass. Mag.*, vol. 1, p. 449 (July, 1789).

The following imperfect Lines are with diffidence offered to your attention—they arose from the heart—and if you consider them worth an appearance in your useful Miscellany, the imagination of those who can feel will easily supply the deficient stanzas; and the misfortunes of an individual may possibly excite regret and compassion even in the happy few whom destiny has placed upon "a bed of roses."

In the September number appeared her "Philander, a Pastoral Elegy," the only poem, apparently, that she contributed to the magazine during the remainder of that year. As has been indicated, she had adopted the pseudonym Constantia, under which name she had been praised in the department "To Correspondents" in all the later issues of the volume. Her pastoral elegy was termed "truly sublime." Her "beautiful 'Invocation to Hope'...enriched the Monthly Museum" in July; and in November it was hoped that "the elegant Constantia...will do honour to America, by a continuance of her favours." An anonymous woman poet, calling herself Euphelia, in a poem in the December issue, also praised Mrs. Morton's "Invocation to Hope." Under these circumstances it is not strange that Mrs. Morton continued to favor the magazine with her "elegant effusions" during the next year.

A note in the January issue, however, "To the Favourites of the Muses," refers to a difficulty with regard to the pen name which Mrs. Morton had selected:

A second *Constantia*, (who claims a prior right to the signature, as having made use of it some years ago, in various pieces which were printed in the Gentleman and Lady's Town and Country Magazine, printed in Boston, and whose productions are known to her friends under that name) has appeared this month. Her truly Poetical Lines merit every attention. The adoption of a signature already used by a justly admired writer, was rather delicately embarrassing to the Editors; they flatter themselves that their late, and early friend, will both feel themselves pleased at their attention to prevent mistakes. The authoress of *Invocation to Hope*; *Philander*, a pastoral Elegy; *Lines to Euphelia*, &c. will in future have her name decorated with a Star (*) at the end of it, unless one or other of the fair competitors in poetical fame, should be pleased to alter her signature, when due notice will be given, as we sincerely wish to be in the good graces of these valuable writers.

This "second Constantia" was Mrs. Judith Sargent Murray (1751-1820),⁵ of Gloucester, who had used the pseudonym as early as 1784. True to their promise, the editors printed communications from each of the Constantias, designating Mrs. Morton's poems by a star, and beginning in the same number in which the above notice was given.

The item in question, sent in by Mrs. Morton for that issue, was a critique written by Mrs. Mercy Warren upon Chesterfield, an interesting indication of Mrs. Morton's acquaintance with the Revolutionary poetess and dramatist. Further indication of this connection is her "Ode to Mrs. M. Warren," published in the June number. Another exchange of compliments with a rival poetess was Mrs. Morton's "Lines to Euphelia" in the January and June numbers and several answering lyrics by Euphelia.

Mrs. Murray having shown no inclination to relinquish her signature, Mrs. Morton gradually changed hers, first by prefixing another name, Philenia, and after this was well established, dropping the Constantia. It was by the name Philenia, probably first used in the *Columbian Centinel* early in 1790, that she was to be chiefly known as a writer during her lifetime.⁶ In May, 1790, she addressed a poetic epistle to Mrs. Murray (Constantia), in response to "Lines to Philenia" by Mrs. Murray in the April number. Mrs. Morton in her poem said that she had chosen the name Constantia "unconscious of a theft", because all her life she had been constant, a remark of some significance, perhaps, in view of recent occurrences in her family. The matter may have rankled a little in Mrs. Morton's heart, however, for we find her writing of her rival a few years later in terms not wholly complimentary:⁷

⁵See Miss Vena Field's *Constantia, a Study of the Life and Works of Judith Sargent Murray*, University of Maine Studies, 2nd Ser., No. 17, pp. 25-26.

⁶Miss Shuttles, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15, assuming Mrs. Morton's authorship of *The Power of Sympathy*, remarks "not even the well-known pseudonym 'Philenia' was used." Since this pseudonym was not adopted until a year later, the fact is not surprising.

⁷Letter to Joseph Dennie, 27 March, 1797, in the *Dennie Papers*, Harvard University Library.

Yet you must not presume to flatter yourself with being distinguished as the only Author; for Mrs. Murray has given out Proposals for printing by Subscription 600 Pages of "The Gleaner"!!!

In December, 1790,* Mrs. Morton's first long poem, *Ouâbi: or the Virtues of Nature, An Indian Tale. In Four Cantos*, was published at Boston by Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer Andrews. The title page gives the author as "Philenia, a Lady of Boston"; and the dedication to the Honorable James Bowdoin, Esq., is signed "Philenia." Next, a communication, dated Boston, 16 October, 1790, informs the reader that Governor Bowdoin had, before his recent death, accepted and approved the dedication. His letter in regard to the matter indicates that the author has written a rather considerable amount of earlier poetry. He makes these suggestions:

The volume would be enlarged by that Lady's adding to it from her budget of poetry, such a number of pieces, as would make it respectable, not only for the matter, but for its size...

In room of PHILENIA, he thinks it would be best the real name of the fair author should be substituted.

An introduction of four pages follows, in which the author acknowledges her indebtedness to various sources,⁹ chiefly "Azâkia, a Canadian Story," in the *American Museum*, Philadelphia, for September, 1789. She also endeavors to explain the actions of her characters so that they will seem probable to the reader. She closes her introductions with these remarks:

Sanctioned by such authorities, I flatter myself, allowing for the justifiable embellishments of poetry, that I shall not be considered an enthusiast in my descriptions. The liberal reader will, I trust, make many allowances for the various imperfections of the work, from a consideration of my sex and my situation; the one by education incident to weakness, the other from duty devoted to domestic avocations. And I am induced to hope, that the attempting a sub-

*See advertisement in the *Columbian Centinel*, 15 December.

⁹She acknowledges General Lincoln's communications, for rites and customs of the Indians; the *Museum* article (vol. VI, pp. 193-98), for names of the characters and many of the events; writings of M. Mercier (probably the novel *L'homme sauvage*, 1767, of Louis Sébastien Mercier); and William Penn's letters to his friends in England, for characteristics of the "noble savage."

ject wholly American will in some respect entitle me to the partial eye of the patriot; that, as a young author, I shall be received with tenderness, and, as an involuntary one, be criticised with candor.

The title page gives a clue to the subject matter of the poem with a quotation from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*:

Fierce Wars and faithful Loves shall moralize my Song,

while the opening stanzas give further assistance:

'Tis not the court, in dazzling splendor gay,
Where soft luxuriance spreads her silken arms,
Where garish fancy leads the soul astray
And languid nature mourns her slightest charms:

'Tis not the golden hill, nor flow'ry dale,
Which lends my simple muse her artless theme;
But the black forest and uncultur'd vale,
The savage warrior, and the lonely stream.

The story, briefly, is this: Celario, exiled from his European home, while wandering in the forest near the Mississippi, sees a beautiful Illinois woman about to be murdered by a Huron and rescues her. She leads him to her home, where her husband, Ouâbi, welcomes him and invites him to remain with them. He accepts this invitation and joins Ouâbi in an expedition against the Hurons. Celario is wounded in the battle, and Ouâbi sends him back to his wife, Azâkia, to be cared for. Celario, impressed before with her charms, now falls madly in love and beseeches her to be his. In despair at her refusal, he resolves to go away but is persuaded by Ouâbi—not suspecting Celario's love for Azâkia—to remain and care for her while he and his braves again attack the Hurons. Word soon comes that all have been killed, and Celario immediately raises a band of warriors to avenge the death of Ouâbi. They reach the Huron camp just as Ouâbi, bound to the stake, is singing the death song.¹⁰ By this time, Ouâbi has begun to suspect Ce-

¹⁰This song was set to music by a local composer and separately published by Thomas and Andrews, Boston, in 1793, under the title *The Death Song of an Indian chief. Taken from Ouâbi. An Indian Tale. In four cantos. By Philenia, a lady of Boston. Set to music by Mr. Hans Gram, of Boston.* See Evans, Charles: *American Bibliography*, vol. 9, p. 111.

lario's love for Azâkia; and when they reach the Illinois camp, he annuls his marriage with her and gives her to Celario. He himself weds the beautiful young Zisma, but hardly has the ceremony been performed when he falls dying. He tells them that he can no longer live, after having been subjected to dishonor by the Hurons, and tells Celario to take his place as chieftain. His burial is performed with due form, and the situation of his grave is described by the author:

There shall he rest! and if in realms of day,
The GOOD, the BRAVE, diffuse a light divine,
Redoubled splendor gilds the brighten'd ray
Which bids *Ouâbi's* NATIVE VIRTUES shine!

Ouâbi was impartially reviewed in the *Columbian Magazine*,¹¹ the *Massachusetts Magazine*, and other papers in America, and attracted some attention in England, where tales of the "noble savage" had interested readers from the time of Mrs. Behn's *Oroonoko* and earlier. The story of the poem was summarized and the author praised in the *London Monthly Review* for September, 1793.¹²

The reviewer's copy fell into the hands of a certain James Bacon, who decided to use the material for a play in three acts, which he called *The American Indian*. It was not acted but was published by Harrison and Company, 18 Paternoster Row, London, in October, 1795. The title page bears the same quotation from the *Faerie Queene* as does *Ouâbi*. In the preface Mr. Bacon states that his play is founded on Mrs. Morton's poem and quotes the summary of the story from the *Monthly Review*. He says that the only alteration which he makes

is that of leaving *Ouâbi* in the arms of his youthful bride, rather than consign him to the cold embraces of the ghastly tyrant; which as it offers no violence to the moral tendency of the work, will not, I trust, be deemed a deviation of much materiality.

¹¹Quoted in the *Columbian Centinel*, Boston, 4 June, 1791.

¹²J. R., an anonymous writer in "Minor Topics," in *Mag. of Am. Hist.*, vol. 10, p. 420, comments on the fact that the reviewers praise Mrs. Morton's poem more highly than a work of Wordsworth's considered in the same number.

To explain his ascription of so much virtue to rude savages, he quotes at length from Mrs. Morton's introduction to *Ouâbi*. The dedication, "to the most noble Anne, Marchioness of Townshend," is dated Lincoln's Inn, 12 October, 1795. Before beginning the play itself, Mr. Bacon adds another word:

In the construction of the following Drama, I have endeavoured to preserve, as much as I was able, the elegant simplicity by which the Poem on which it is founded is so eminently distinguished; and have invariably adopted the sentiments of the fair Author. The Death Song, which has been justly admired for the excellency of its composition, is the production of Mrs. MORTON, and literally copied from the VIRTUES OF NATURE.

His *dramatis personae* include Mrs. Morton's four principal characters and add another, Izênia, a friend of Azâkia. In addition, he has Illinois chiefs, warriors, and female attendants, and Huron chiefs and warriors. Bacon follows the order of events very closely but adds certain incidents and develops others more fully. He also introduces several songs to be sung by Zisma. He is very careful to work in details that require explanation by Mrs. Morton's notes, which he uses in full.

On the last page of the volume containing *Ouâbi*—whether or not a result of Mr. Bowdoin's advice—is inserted a poem entitled *Lines addressed to the inimitable Author of the Poems under the Signature of Della Crusca*,¹³ and signed Philenia. This was also reprinted in the *Massachusetts Magazine*,¹⁴ in the *New York Magazine*,¹⁵ and in *American Poems*,¹⁶ each time under the pseudonym Philenia, though the *New York Magazine* adds that it is "supposed to be written by Mrs. M---n, of Boston."

As early as April, 1790, Mrs. Morton had aroused the admiration of a friend who was to be very influential in the building up of her poetical reputation. This was Thomas Paine, poet and critic, son of Robert Treat Paine, a prominent Boston lawyer. Young Paine, who later changed his name to Robert Treat, Jr., was then a junior at Harvard, where he was graduated in 1792.

¹³i.e., Robert Merry.

¹⁴December, 1790 (vol. II, p. 761).

¹⁵March, 1791, p. 176.

¹⁶p. 184.

While yet a student, he contributed extensively to the *Massachusetts Magazine*, using the pseudonyms "Aegon," "Celadon," and "Menander." In the April issue, 1790, he had addressed to her "A Pastoral, Humbly Dedicated to Philenia Constantia," signed "Aegon." The *Works of Robert Treat Paine, Jr.*, published after his death, include under the heading "College Exercises" a poem written while he was an undergraduate, entitled "The Laurell'd Nymph, Addressed to Philenia," in which her poetry is extravagantly praised. In his poem "The Ruling Passion," which he was invited to read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard in 1797, he referred to her in the following lines:

Man's noblest powers could ne'er the law revoke,
Though Handel harmonized what Chatham spoke:
Though tuneful Morton's magic genius graced
The Hyblan melody of Merry's taste.

Paine's enthusiasm for her verses was unbounded and doubtless much greater than their merits justified; but it may perhaps with fairness be asserted that in fluency, regularity, and musical quality they excelled those of any other American woman writer of her time.

Besides her *Ouâbi* and her poems and prose in the *Massachusetts Magazine*, in 1790 and following, Mrs. Morton also contributed occasionally to the *Columbian Centinel*, perhaps the best of the several Boston newspapers of the time. In England, the epistolary flirtation of "Della Crusca," (Captain Robert Merry) and "Anna Matilda" (Mrs. Hannah Cowley), begun in the London *World* in 1787, attracted much attention; and it was widely copied in the New England newspapers as well as elsewhere. In the *Centinel* for 12 March, 1791, the editor, Major Benjamin Russell, printed the following invitation:

To afford to the afflicted soul, the balm of consolation, who better qualified than the amiable PHILENIA. *Della Crusca* and *Anna Matilda* have ameliorated the Eastern world—a newspaper was the medium of their correspondence. *The Centinel*, emulating the example, solicits the correspondence of PHILENIA and ALFRED, that the Western Hemisphere, may be alike benefited.

This paragraph was followed by an anonymous poem "To Philenia," in the *Della Cruscan* style of effusive compliment, signed

"Alfred." Mrs. Morton accepted the challenge with a reply in similar vein in the issue of 16 April, beginning

Alfred, the heaven lent muse is thine,
Then bid impetuous sorrow cease;
And at the bright Apollo's shrine
Recal thy exil'd heart to peace.

A second exchange, "Alfred to Philenia," 14 May, and "Philenia to Alfred," 28 May, concluded the correspondence. The identity of "Alfred" is uncertain. He may have been, as Mrs. Bailey asserts,¹⁷ Robert Treat Paine, Jr.; but there seems to be no evidence to that effect. He may have been Joseph Dennie, William Hill Brown, or any other of a dozen young poetasters of Boston. The series of poems, while possessing relatively little merit, attracted some favorable comment and were complimented by inclusion in the first American anthology, published by Dr. E. H. Smith at Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1793.¹⁸ The editor also included a passage from *Beacon Hill*, and the shorter poems, "Ode to the President on his Visiting the Northern States," "Invocation to Hope," "Prayer to Patience," and "Lines . . . to Della Crusca,"—a total of seventeen pages, making her one of the American poets most honored by the volume. *The Columbian Muse*, a similar volume of selections of American poetry, published by James Carey in New York and Philadelphia in the following year, also included the "Invocation to Hope" and the "Prayer to Patience."¹⁹

Other *Centinel* poems during 1791 were her "Elegiac Lines To the Memory of Mrs. Abigail Jones," 17 March; "Epitaph upon Dr. Andre Carente," a "*Soi-disant materialist*, with an Infidel head, but a feeling heart";²⁰ and on 28 December, her "Monody to the Memory of the Young Heroes who Fought and Fell under General St. Clair, at the Miami of the Lakes," a tragic defeat which had greatly impressed the national imagination and sympathies.

¹⁷Bailey, Marcia E., *A Lesser Hartford Wit, Dr. Elihu Hubbard Smith*, University of Maine Studies, 2nd Ser., No. 11, pp. 45 and 67. Miss Ruth Clough, in her study of Robert Treat Paine, Jr., (Univ. of Maine master's thesis, 1930) denies this identification.

¹⁸*American Poems*, Litchfield, 1793, pp. 186-192.

¹⁹*The Columbian Muse*, pp. 221-3.

²⁰*M.M.I.T.*, pp. 251-2, note on p. 280.

On the day before Christmas, 1791, the *Centinel* printed a prose article by Philenia on the Episcopalian custom of decorating their churches and homes with evergreens, while Calvinistic New Englanders were still avoiding any celebration of Christmas as a Popish festival. In another Boston newspaper, the *Argus*, an unknown critic, possibly the Reverend John Sylvester John Gardiner, criticized on 14 August, 1792, Mrs. Morton's *Ouâbi* on the ground of metrical deficiencies, but principally for the author's attitude toward the morals of the chief characters. Her reply, 21 August, admitted the faults, pleaded haste in composition, and defended herself on the charge of inconsistency. "Conon," the critic, not satisfied with her defence, reiterated his assertions in a further article on 28 August, closing with the request that "toward your next child, PHILENIA, you be not so sparing of the rod."

Among the periodicals which copied Mrs. Morton's poems frequently were the *New York Magazine*; the *Gazette of the United States*, at Philadelphia, chief organ of the Federalist party; and a little later, Paine's *Federal Orrery*, at Boston, and Dennie's *Farmer's Weekly Museum*, at Walpole, New Hampshire.

Two poems in the *Massachusetts Magazine* for 1791 [1792?] rank Mrs. Morton among the pioneers in sonnet-writing in the United States. These were her "Sonnet to General Lincoln" in the January issue and "The Retrospect, Written in declining Health," in October. The only American writers of sonnets before her who have thus far been identified are William Hill Brown, Colonel David Humphreys, and Elihu Hubbard Smith. Her sonnets in general follow a definite though irregular pattern, the rhyme scheme being *abbacddceffgg*. The first of these, as a typical example, may be quoted, particularly as it celebrates a friend to whom Mrs. Morton enjoyed paying a tribute of gratitude.²¹

SONNET, TO
MAJOR GENERAL LINCOLN

Think not, brave LINCOLN, that the rage of time,
Can from thy warrior brow the laurel rend;
Though midst its green the living snows descend,
It still shall flourish with unfading prime.

²¹Published first in the *Massachusetts Magazine*, January, 1791. Included in *M.M.I.T.*, p. 141.

See the wrapt student at his midnight oil,
Recount thy deeds and lead thee down to fame,
While the young hero kindles at thy name,
Dwells on thy glorious wounds, and boasts thy toil.

How o'er red Carolina's arid plain,²²
Thine was to brave the dog-star's striking glow,
And thine to lead bleak winters hardy train,
O'er Pelham's stormy heights—through Athol's²³ vales
of snow;

THERE, first in danger, forced thy fearless way,
HERE, at thy feet, subdued rebellion lay.

As early as the autumn of 1791, both Mrs. Morton and her husband had become interested in agitation which was to continue for several years, for the repeal of the law of 1750 prohibiting dramatic performances in Massachusetts, and for the establishment of a theatre in the town. On 26 October of that year, Perez Morton was made chairman of a committee of citizens to make representations to the legislature in behalf of a repeal. When, after considerable contention, the legislature finally took favorable action in 1793, Mr. Morton became one of the share-holders and trustees in the new theatre erected in Federal Street.²⁴ A competitive prize was offered for the best poem written to be read in honor of the dedication of the playhouse. Mrs. Morton was urged to become a contestant. Her persistent refusal elicited in the *Columbian Centinel*, 6 November, 1793, a sonnet signed "Thespis," addressed to Philenia, "on her too modestly declining to become a candidate for the medal offered by the Trustees of the Theatre." The competition was won by her friend Paine, who was the most active supporter of the theatre in Boston for a number of years. Mrs. Morton's continued interest is indicated by a letter from

²²Referring to Lincoln's participation in the defense of Charleston, South Carolina.

²³Pelham and Athol, Mass., were scene of activity in Shays' Rebellion, which Lincoln was commissioned to suppress.

²⁴*Proc. of the Col. Soc. of Mass. (Transactions, 1897-8)*, Vol. I, pp. 282-93. Mrs. Morton became owner of one-sixtieth of the theatre by purchase from Samuel Clap of Boston, 21 November, 1795. See Suffolk County Registry of Deeds.

Joseph Dennie to his friend Royall Tyler, 2 October, 1795, in which, urging Tyler to resume dramatic composition, he writes:²⁵

Whether you choose to have your opera sung or a future *new* comedy acted with great pomp, by His Majesty's servants, and praised by Gardner,²⁶ heard by Morton, & puffed by me; this is the "mollia tempora."

By the end of 1791, Mrs. Morton's reputation as a poetess was so well established that the editors of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, in the December number of that year, confidently referred to her as "the Sappho of America." This cognomen was inevitable when it was a regular form of recognition to dub an American author "the American Addison,"²⁷ "the American Butler,"²⁸ and the like. Another borrowed literary epithet was conferred upon her by Dennie in tribute to her combination of social and literary prominence, when he described her song "Reanimation" as the "union of poesy and piety effected by the pen of the Mrs. Montagu of America."²⁹

²⁵In the *Dennie Papers*, Harvard Univ. Library.

²⁶The Rev. John Sylvester John Gardiner, a friend and patron of the Theatre.

²⁷i.e., Joseph Dennie.

²⁸i.e., Thomas Green Fessenden; the same title was applied to the poet Trumbull.

²⁹In *The Tablet*, Boston, 21 July, 1795.

CHAPTER IV

THE AMERICAN SAPPHO: "BEACON HILL" 1793-1797

Mrs. Morton's contributions continued in the *Columbian Centinel* and the *Massachusetts Magazine* at irregular intervals through 1793, and in the former sporadically for several years. In the latter, she had printed in January a poem "To Pollio," a tribute to the famous painter, John Trumbull. Later in life, she revised this poem under the title "Lines Inscribed to a Celebrated Historical Painter, Upon his Return from Great Britain to the United States," under which caption it appears in *My Mind and Its Thoughts*.¹ It is interesting to observe the numerous alterations in diction and imagery, nearly always for the better, in the later version; and the increasing attention to consistent grammatical structure, in contrast with the looseness of construction which was a frequent defect in her early verses. These changes give evidence of a considerable advance in poetic technique during the period of her active work. As an excellent example of Mrs. Morton's practice of revision the two versions are given below:

¹*M. M. I. T.*, pp. 49-50.

TO POLLIO

Not Pollio that these humble lays
Can swell the torrent of thy praise,
That thou the young Columbia's boast,
The pride of Britain's polish'd coast,
Can'st from the muse's wafting breath,
Receive a fairer, fonder wreath,
Than that two rival worlds bestow,
To grace thy fame embellish'd brow;
But sacred friendship bows the knee,
To genius, virtue, and to thee.

She whose first dawn of life you knew,
When on that voice instruction grew,
When ev'ry word a moral taught,
And kindness smooth'd the pointed thought,
She sees her early friend restor'd,
With ev'ry worth her youth ador'd,
Sees thee unlike the marble race
Who shun affliction's alter'd face,
Still thy benignant accent hears,
Still finds that truth her soul revere,

Ah! Pollio, not the loud acclaim,
The far extending voice of fame:
Not all the joys thy art can give
Not thro' the waste of time to live,
Not all thy patriot valour known,
The light with which thy parent shone,
Can to thy bosom yield a good,
Like thy own conscious rectitude.

Long have I felt the prying stare,
The mean neglect, th'insulting air,
Felt those by ties of blood allied
Stab the already wounded side,
And scorning ev'ry kindred part
Still tear the lacerated heart;
While malice flung the shaft of pain,
Have bid the smile of pity reign,
And calm philosophy control
The tumult of the swelling soul;
Have seen the giddy careless throng,
Melt at the sorrows of a song,
While the mild stranger still supplied
That tear hard cruelty denied.

In vain the wearied mind has fought
For worth mid folly's rude resort,
But found with heart enraptur'd pride,
Virtue and genius still allied.

LINES

INSCRIBED TO A CELEBRATED HISTORICAL PAINTER, UPON HIS RETURN
FROM GREAT BRITAIN TO THE UNITED STATES

Not RAPHAEL—that these lowly lays,
Can reach the summit of thy praise,
That thou, the young Columbia's boast,
The pride of Britain's polished coast,
Can'st from the muses fragrant breath,
Receive a finer, fonder wreath;
Than that *two rival worlds* bestow,
To grace thy fame embellished brow.
But *holier friendship* bows the knee,
To virtue, genius, and to thee.

She, whose fair morn of life was new,
When on that voice instruction grew,
While every word a moral taught,
And kindness won the wandering thought,
She sees her early friend restored,
With every worth her youth adored,
Sees him, unlike the summer race,
Who shun affliction's altering face;
Still the benignant accent hears,
Still finds that worth her soul revere.

Ah, RAPHAEL! not the loud acclaim,
And far extending voice of fame;
Not all the joys *THY ART* can give,
Not through the lapse of time to live,
Not all thy *patriot valour* known,
The light with which thy Parent shone!
Can to thy bosom yield a good,
Like thine own conscious rectitude.

For me, by many a lesson taught,
Of patient hope, the enduring thought;
Oft have I met the insidious stare,
The mean neglect, the enquiring air,
Which shunning every kindlier part,
Still probed the lacerated heart,
While malice urged the shaft of pain,
Have bid the smile of pity reign;
And *proud serenity* controul
The anguish of the indignant soul.
Have seen the giddy careless throng,
Melt at the sorrows of a song;
While the mild stranger still supplied,
That tear, *known arrogance* denied.

In vain the searching mind has sought,
For worth, mid folly's rude resort,
And still with heart-exulting pride,
Found TRUTH with GENIUS close allied.

Mrs. Morton's humane instincts early brought her into active sympathy with the efforts of the manumission, or abolition, societies which were being formed throughout the country in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Through her poems she became one of the chief literary spokesmen of the early movement. Her first known utterance on the subject was a long poem occupying a full column when reprinted in the *Columbian Centinel*, 3 August, 1791. Entitled "Tears of Humanity," it lamented the failure of the British Parliament to enact a bill recently before it, providing for abolishment of the slave trade in the Empire. It first appeared in the *Massachusetts Magazine* for July, 1791. Much better known was "The African Chief," first printed in the *Columbian Centinel*, 9 June, 1792. This was very widely reprinted, was included frequently in school readers, and was often quoted effectively by those interested in freeing the slaves. Whittier gives testimony to its effect on him, in "Snow-Bound" quoting the altered line, "The chief of Gambia's golden shore," and the entire stanza beginning, "Does not the voice of Freedom cry."

The reasons for its popularity are evident. It possesses real eloquence and genuine emotion. The writer wisely elects to introduce her African prince as actual prisoner on a slave ship and avoids ending with the heroic escape through death which became almost a convention in anti-slavery poems. The stilted diction of the "hard race of pallid hue" is unavoidable, of course; but drawing upon "Messenia's sons" and "Roman Decius" for illustrations should be forgiven, remembering the fact that to the readers of the school histories of her time the Roman and Greek heroes were as familiar as William of Orange or Paoli. In view of its later fame and its real excellence, it may be quoted here in full:

THE AFRICAN CHIEF

See how the black ship cleaves the main,
High bounding o'er the dark blue wave,
Remurmuring with the groans of pain,
Deep freighted with the princely slave.

Did all the gods of Afric sleep,
Forgetful of their guardian love,
When the white tyrants of the deep,
Betray'd him in the palmy grove?

A chief of Gambia's golden shore,
Whose arm the band of warriors led;
Or more—the lord of generous power,
By whom the foodless poor were fed.

Does not the voice of reason cry,
"Claim the first right that nature gave,
From the red scourge of bondage fly,
Nor deign to live a burden'd slave?"

Has not his suffering offspring clung,
Desponding, round his fetter'd knee;
On his worn shoulder, weeping hung,
And urged one effort to be free?

His wife by nameless wrongs subdued,
His bosom's friend to death resign'd
The flinty path-way drench'd in blood;
He saw with cold and frenzied mind.

Strong in despair, he sought the plain,
To heaven was raised his steadfast eye,
Resolved to burst the crushing chain,
Or 'mid the battle's blast, to die.

First of his race, he led the band,
Guardless of danger, hurtling round,
Till by his red avenging hand,
Full many a despot stained the ground.

When erst Messenia's sons oppress'd,
Flew desperate to the sanguine field,
With iron clothed each injured breast,
And saw the cruel Spartan yield,

Did not the soul to heaven allied,
With the proud heart as greatly swell,
As when the Roman Decius died,
Or when the Grecian victim fell?

Do later deeds quick rapture raise,
The boon Batavia's William won,
Paoli's time-enduring praise,
Or the yet greater Washington?

If these exalt thy sacred zeal,
To hate oppression's mad control,
For bleeding Afric learn to feel,
Whose chieftain claimed a kindred soul.

Oh! mourn the last disastrous hour,
Lift the full eye of bootless grief,
While victory treads the sultry shore,
And tears from hope the captive chief.

While the hard race of pallid hue,
Unpractised in the power to feel,
Resign him to the murderous crew,
The horrors of the quivering wheel.

Let sorrow bathe each blushing cheek,
Bent piteous o'er the tortured slave,
Whose wrongs compassion cannot speak,
Whose only refuge was the grave.

Paine's exchange of compliments with Mrs. Morton continued in the newspaper *Massachusetts Mercury*, beginning in February, 1793, with a series of laudatory verses from Menander to Philenia and from Philenia to Menander.² He also addressed to her a sonnet in the *Massachusetts Magazine* for February, 1793. When his father and friends established him as editor of the *Federal Orrery* at Boston in October of the following year,³ he confidently expected that she would become one of his chief contributors. In this he was disappointed, however, for few pieces by her appeared in the literary section of his paper and nothing after the first volume.⁴

While Mrs. Morton was thus occupied in the literary field, her husband was prospering professionally and financially. He had been made barrister in 1786, one of the last holders of that legal title in Massachusetts.⁵ Advertisements in the Boston newspapers indicate that in the 1780's and 1790's he was dealing extensively in real estate in Boston and in newly opened lands in the younger portions of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, and Maine.⁶ Late in 1791 or early in 1792 he was one of several prominent men in Boston who joined to form the Union Bank, the second bank established in the town. When it was

²Some of the poems, with an explanatory note, are printed in Paine's *Works in Prose and Verse*, pp. 129-136.

³See Miss Ruth Clough's *Life and Works of Robert Treat Paine, Jr.* (University of Maine Master's thesis), pp. 75-8 and 103.

⁴Buckingham, *Specimens of Newspaper Literature*, vol. II, p. 224.

⁵*Pubs. of Col. Soc. of Mass. (Transactions, 1897-8)*, vol. V, p. 289, note.

⁶See advertisement in the *Independent Chronicle*, Thurs., 23 April, 1789.

incorporated, 25 June, 1792, Perez Morton became one of the shareholders and directors. After seeking quarters in a "convenient building situated either in Cornhill or State Street," they rented rooms on the lower floor of the Morton residence. This arrangement continued until about 1797, when the family removed from Boston. In 1799 the building was sold to the bank and altered to suit the needs of a commercial house. It was taken down in 1826, to be replaced by a larger structure.⁸

Morton was also actively engaged in politics, being a well known member of the Democratic-Republican party at Boston and a leader in the gatherings of the so-called "Jacobin Club," the Boston Constitutional Society, which held meetings at the Green Dragon Tavern. The predominant party in Massachusetts at this time was the Federalist, and any active member of the Democratic-Republican opposition speedily became an object of attack in the political lampoons of the times. It is chiefly from these that we learn of Morton's political activities during this period. Joseph Tinker Buckingham⁹ gives an account of a celebration got up by the Democratic-Republicans, slightly referred to as the "Jacobins," in honor of the third anniversary of the French Republic, 21 September, 1795. They had a public procession, which was formed on the lower floor of the Old State House, in State Street, and marched through Merchants Row to Faneuil Hall, where a banquet was served. This affair was commemorated in the *Federal Orrery* by Thomas (later Robert Treat, Jr.) Paine in a "Song of Liberty and Equality," which satirizes the leaders of the Democrats. His reference to Morton follows:

Lo, down in yon corner—afraid to be seen,
PEREZ pokes out the end of his chin—his chin;
All ready to join—when the corner they turn;
O Perez, thy case might a hero abash,
Thou fearest thy neighbors—thou lovest French cash—
Sansculottes, with scorn,
Behold thy dissembling,
Thy blustering, and trembling—Huzza.

⁸Advertisement in *Columbian Centinel*, 28 July, 1792. Cornhill was part of the present Washington Street.

⁹*The Log of the State Street Trust Company*, Boston, 1926, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰*Specimens of Newspaper Literature*, vol. II, pp. 239-43.

On this stanza Buckingham has the following note:

Perez Morton, a lawyer of good standing. He did not join the procession at the place whence it started, but awaited its arrival at the store of one of his political associates, near Fanueil Hall. . . .

Paine closes his song with this stanza:

Farewell, ye Sansculottes—I leave ye to dine,
With your hoofs in your dishes, like swine—like swine,
For once stuff your stomachs, as long as they'll hold;
The Doctor¹⁰ will help you to purge it away,
And PEREZ and HONEE¹¹ attend you for pay;
While SAMUEL¹² the old,
On stool of repentance,
Will whine out a sentence—TO HEAVEN.

The Jacobins are also satirized in "Benjamin's Feast," a clever parody of Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," appended to the Reverend J. S. J. Gardiner's *Remarks on the Jacobiniad*, 1795, in which Perez takes the part of Timotheus.

In 1794 Mr. Morton was elected a representative in the General Court of Massachusetts, serving apparently until 1796, in which year his name is listed among the defeated candidates.¹³ During the debates on the unpopular Jay's Treaty in town meeting on 10 July, 1795, after a unanimous vote had been taken against its adoption, Morton was chosen one of a committee of fifteen to consider and draw up the objections of the citizens to the several articles of the treaty, to be submitted in an address to the President of the United States.¹⁴

In view of Morton's partisanship for the French Revolution, it is especially interesting to note Mrs. Morton's sentiments with

¹⁰Dr. Charles Jarvis, of Boston, (1748-1807) a distinguished physician, surgeon, politician, and orator, friend and associate of Hancock, Adams, and Jefferson.

¹¹Benjamin Austin, Jr., whose nickname is an abbreviation of his pseudonym *Honestus*, chief writer for the *Independent Chronicle*, Boston.

¹²Samuel Hewes, son of Shubael Hewes, satirized in another stanza. He was also a writer for the *Chronicle*.

¹³*Boston Town Records*, vol. 31 (1784-1796), p. 430, under date of 11 May, 1796.

¹⁴Vol. 31, *Boston Town Records*, 1784-1796, p. 406.

regard to events across the ocean. That they were, as might be expected, pro-English and anti-French, is shown in her poems, "Batavia" and "Marie-Antoinette," the latter of which was printed in an inaccurate form in the *Columbian Centinel*, 18 January, 1794.¹⁵ These express horror at the excesses of the revolutionists and strong sympathy for any people whom she considers oppressed by them. The poem "Batavia: An Elegy, Written upon the Unresisted Subjugation of the United Provinces to the French Revolutionists," follows:

Degenerate race, ye lost Batavians, say,
Where is the blood that warmed the patriot's veins?
When in your great first William's glorious day,
Invading armies fled the unconquered plains?

Where is that spirit of your hardy sires,
Which turned indignant from a foreign lord,
And where that hope, a country's cause inspires,
The stateman's virtue, and the warrior's sword?

The swarthy Gaul now claims the willow'd meads,
Where your famed fathers, patient, proud and poor,
Stamp'd their bold annals with triumphant deeds,
And learnt the trying lesson to endure.

Ye sons of traffic! lost Batavians, say,
Does the hard victor heed the captive's moan,
Can the fierce wolf resign his trembling prey,
Nor make the rich luxurious treat his own.

Who calls the shaggy monarch of the wood,
To yield the fleecy fold his fostering care!
No more to quench his burning lip in blood,
But learn with tasteless apathy to spare?

Thus shall ye thrive beneath the victor's sway,
And thus the fierce *Exotic* guard your coast,
Who flung with careless hand, a prize away,
Richer than all your conquer'd country's boast.

Transcendant FREEDOM, offspring of the soil,
Ne'er can an alien's hand that gem bestow,
Whose brilliant rays reward the patriot's toil,
Grace his bold front, and on his bosom glow.

¹⁵Reprinted correctly, 25 January. The two poems are printed together in *M.M.I.T.*, pp. 84-5 and 85-7, respectively.

When, in the spring of 1795, Joseph Dennie was in Boston arranging for the publication of his short-lived magazine venture, *The Tablet*, he visited Mrs. Morton to secure her interest in the project. Evidently she heartily approved, for he wrote from Boston to his mother, 24 April, "I forgot to tell you that G. R. Minot and Mrs. Morton are among my warmest partizans."¹⁶ When *The Tablet* was launched, he reprinted, in the issue for 21 July, 1795, her hymn, "Reanimation," from the *Massachusetts Magazine* of the preceding month; but no original contribution of her pen has been identified in it.

Mrs. Morton's first interest in Beacon Hill, Boston, as a subject for poetic treatment had been shown in a poem in the *Columbian Centinel*, 4 December, 1790, entitled "Lines Written at the request of a Friend, on the View from Beacon Hill."¹⁷ It was apparently occasioned by the recent erection of a commemorative monument on the hill. By March, 1793, she had begun work on a more elaborate descriptive and historical treatment of the subject, prevailed upon, as she says, by someone "whose injunctions it is my pleasure to regard, . . . himself, at an early period of life, actively engaged in these important deeds."¹⁸ It is not unlikely that this was General Henry Knox, who was a close friend of the family. On the twentieth of the same month, the *Columbian Centinel* copied from the *Massachusetts Mercury* a laudatory paragraph announcing Philenia's undertaking the poem, followed by a long stanza by "Menander" in praise of her. In the summer of 1795, it was still in process of composition when Paine, in his Harvard Commencement poem "The Invention of Letters," delivered 15 July, 1795, praised her as an outstanding American historical writer in company with David Ramsay, Jeremy Belknap, George R. Minot, John Trumbull and James Allen.¹⁹ Once more, on 30 July, 1797, Paine, in his Phi Beta Kappa poem, "The Ruling Passion," at Harvard, refers to the work which

¹⁶Dennie Papers.

¹⁷Reprinted in the *Gazette of the U. S.*, 18 Dec., 1790.

¹⁸Introduction to *Beacon Hill*.

¹⁹Ramsay, author of a *History of the American Revolution*; Belknap, of a *History of New Hampshire*; Minot, of a *History of Shays's Rebellion*. Trumbull wrote *M'Fingal* and Allen a poem entitled "The Battle of Bunker's Hill."

. . . . she is now preparing for publication which, we presume, will do honor to the country that gave it birth, and induce the candid editors of the *English Reviews* to appreciate their estimation of cis-atlantic genius.

Mrs. Morton explains her tardiness by saying that she worked on the poem only during the "leisure and retirement" of the summer months and did not neglect "the appropriate occupations of my sex and station." Doubtless a desire to avoid such criticisms as those of "Conon" regarding the inconsistencies and metrical blemishes of *Ouâbi* also prompted her to a more careful and deliberate revision of this her most ambitious venture.

Finally, in the latter part of 1797, Part I was published under the title of *Beacon Hill, a Local Poem, Historic and Descriptive*, dedicated "To the Citizen-Soldiers, who fought, conquered, and RETIRED, under the banners of WASHINGTON and FREEDOM." Her introduction, explaining her motives and scope, as well as her hopes and fears for the reception of *Beacon Hill*, is one of her best pieces of prose. A portion of it follows:²⁰

I am aware, it may be objected to the production, which assumes the title of *Beacon Hill*, that the appellation is not sufficiently appropriate, and that twenty other names would equally apply to those conspicuous features, which the author has attempted to delineate. True—but

"What's in a name? that which we call a rose
"By any other name would smell as sweet."

If the performance has merit, the name, as it does not imply an absurdity, will not, it is presumed, create an objection; or if, in concurrence with the fears of its author, the whole be consigned to hopeless oblivion—By any other name the thing would sink as low. . . .

Impressed with the idea, that an author should be considered of no sex, and that the individual must be lost in the writer, I solicit unprejudiced criticism and invite candid censure; for in presuming to meet the public eye, I am sensible it is necessary to resign all personal considerations, and that neither my avocations nor my incapacity will be suffered to plead for me: but I have dared to hope, that my verses alone can receive the general disapprobation, as no party prejudice, no spirit of contention, has degraded the

²⁰pp. vii-ix.

exalted theme: to those, whom the annals of their country have mentioned with honor, the *Muse* has given glory; yet has not the limits of the poem permitted the author to bestow on every individual *all* the applause, which his own great actions, on the ample page of history, will more gracefully perpetuate. In situations, where an equality of character was conspicuous, some brilliant event of superior fortune, not personal prepossession, has induced the alternative: nor will, it is anxiously hoped, offense be felt, where only honor was intended.

It has also been the intention of the author tenaciously to preserve a sacred regard for eventful facts, although in some instances she had ventured to transpose their period—and if it has appeared poetically essential to vary the chronology, in no instance, to her knowledge, has the integrity of history been violated.

The apprehensive feelings of the author did not permit her at present to offer more than the first book—what remain are perhaps not more meritorious, and if this fail to please, ruin is alike the portion of them all

I know, my fair friends, that with many, who do not write, application to literature in a female is imagined to imply a neglect of appropriate duties. As this idea has originated rather in misapprehension than malignity, it may not be improper to observe, that it is only amid the leisure and retirement, to which the sultry season is devoted, that I permit myself to hold converse with the Muses; nor does their enchantment ever allure me from one personal occupation, which my station renders obligatory; but those hours, which might otherwise be lost in dissipation, or sunk in languor, are alone resigned to the unoffending charms of Poetry and Science.

S.M.

That she had seriously studied the historical sources available is indicated by her references, which include Belknap, Lendrum's *Selections*, Bartram's *Travels*, Ramsay's *History of the Revolution*, James Allen's manuscript poem on Bunker Hill, and Dr. William Gordon,²¹ cited as an authority on the beginning of the Revolution.

The poem opens with a brief description of the view from Beacon Hill:

Far from this spot, ye light delusions, fly,
While fix'd ATTENTION lifts her boundless eye,
O'er BUNKER'S field each hallow'd view explores,

²¹*History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of the United States*, 1788.

Sees the twin-rivers lave the purple shores,
Where the high soil disdain'd the trembling flood,
And stain'd the white wave with *Britannia's* blood.—
Unwearying change the sacred scene displays,
Pillar'd with hills, that fling the morning rays,
And glass'd with streams, that through the twilight glade
Reflect the reddening skies and broider'd shade;
Here light scyons' wavy beauties flow,
And seem a plumage on the mountain's brow,
There the proud dome o'erlooks the distant mead,
Where the blue MYSTIC lifts his sparkling head,
CERES in smiles her liberal treasure yields,
And waves of gold enrich the floating fields.

Following the example of epic writers of all countries and ages, Mrs. Morton invokes various deities and muses to her aid, conspicuous among them being the Muse of History. Then, after her address to Washington, she begins her narrative with the retreat from Bunker's Hill and the death of Warren, sketches the siege and evacuation of Boston, the gathering of the Colonial armies, and the Declaration of Independence, and concludes with a "Prophetic Apostrophe to the Progress of Freedom throughout the World." She inserts a brief account of each colony, with a eulogy of its special revolutionary hero or heroes, Washington representing "Columbia" as a whole; Benjamin Lincoln, Massachusetts; Israel Putnam, Connecticut; John Sullivan and her kinsman John Wentworth, New Hampshire; Nathaniel Greene, Rhode Island; Montgomery and Schuyler, New York; and so on through McIntosh for Georgia and Henry Knox for "Artillery." At this point, Part I concludes.

Mrs. Morton apparently seemed somewhat skeptical as to the reception the poem would receive but promised that if those whose judgment, taste, and talents she respected should approve, "the succeeding numbers will instantly appear." The content of the four parts remaining unpublished is hinted at in the Introduction:

The noble enthusiasm of the gallant *Fayette*, the heroic and impassioned adventures of Lady *Harriot Ackland*, the tragic fate of the unfortunate Miss *McCrea*, and the pathetic perils of the young and accomplished *Asgil*.

The poem contains echoes of Milton's "Il Penseroso" and "L'Allegro," with certain phrases reminiscent of the beginning of

Paradise Lost (e.g., "venturous song," l. 14); of Pope's "Essay on Criticism"; Gray's "Eton College" and "Elegy in a Country Churchyard"; and Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" in her reference to "Altimaha" and her list of terrors to be found under the "vertic sun" of Georgia, including the alligator—"mail'd reptile of Egyptian Nile"—

While from the cavern of his clashing jaw
The hands of death an hundred arrows draw."²²

The meter is iambic pentameter lines rhyming in pairs, with such variations to an occasional alexandrine and infrequent run-on couplets as the eighteenth century approved. Inversions are common, and there is much personification, as in

... fixed ATTENTION lifts her boundless eye.

Periphrastic diction is common, as in "the placid kind" (Quakers, p. 30) "that fatal weed" (tobacco, p. 33), and the description of the alligator above. The inevitable "genial gales" are present, as is also a "barley'd hill." (p. 26). The mannerism which is most noticeable is the coining of descriptive adjectives formed by adding a -y to nouns, as in "moony horn" (p. 34), "spiky summit" (of a pine, p. 37), and "grainy hills" (p. 24). Epic similes occur, once developed to absurd dimensions in the description of a swimming boy (p. 42). The poetess allows herself frequent digressions, twice to assail slavery (pp. 33 and 35) and once in defense of the Indians (pp. 27-28), by "arts of craftier foes subdued," and to confer tributes on her cousin John Wentworth, baronet (p. 26), and on her husband's oration on Warren (p. 17):

... Genius, rising o'er the rescued bier.

Perhaps the best passage of verse is the first lines of the concluding prophecy:

THUS SANG THE MINSTREL, by the theme inspired,
With truth, with freedom, with ambition fired;—
What though her brow no laurel wreath displays,
To lure attention by the power of praise;
Though the cold clime subdue the Muse's flame,
And colder bosoms blast the hope of fame,

²²Page 37, lines 17-20.

Some bard more blest may the high strain prolong,
Till free *Columbia* feel the sway of song,
Till, as the streams of epic music roll,
Past scenes of glory fill the patriot's soul,
The torpid heart of dull indifference charm,
To pity waken, and to virtue warm,
Of deathless deeds the treasured meed proclaim,
And round the Hero's twine the Poet's name. . . .

Since the "succeeding numbers" did not "instantly appear," one is forced to conclude that the poem did not meet with the enthusiastic approval which Philenia's admirer, Paine, anticipated. Though her poetical reputation rested chiefly on this work and *Ouâbi*, her friends on the whole seem to have been disappointed with the outcome of this rather elaborate historical undertaking. Two mildly favorable notices of the work appeared in the *Columbian Centinel*. One compared her effort with poems by Homer, Tasso, and Goldsmith. The other noted reminders of passages by Milton, Shakespeare, and other poets. Sensitive to criticism, she doubtless wisely decided that her friends had been over-zealous in urging her to undertake so ambitious a project. She was probably also disturbed by such caustic comments on the effusiveness of Paine's praises of her verse as had appeared anonymously in the *American Apollo*, Boston, 24 May, 1793:

Thy "bosom bankrupt"—ah! too true the thought;
A bankruptcy indeed that breast displays
Which knows no joys but those from *flattery* caught,
Which knows no "solace" like *Menander's* praise.*

TRUTH

*Alluding to the puffs of *Menander*, a writer as celebrated for his partiality as want of judgment.

Another critic in the same newspaper added on 7 June following:

Menander has long been employed in quality of recruiting sergeant to Philenia, but with all his puffs has never been able to raise one recruit.

Concerning the justness of this attack, it should be said that Paine was by no means alone in praising, even in overpraising Mrs. Morton's verse. And considering how few, particularly of her sex, there were to vie with her, the almost unanimous chorus of adulation is perhaps not to be wondered at.

CHAPTER V

AT DORCHESTER: "VIRTUES OF SOCIETY"

1797-1808

Possibly one reason for Mrs. Morton's delay in preparing *Beacon Hill* for publication was the removal of the family from Boston to Dorchester. The exact date of this removal is uncertain, but it was probably during the latter part of 1796, or early in 1797. Mrs. Morton, in a letter to Dennie quoted below,¹ refers to "practicing, without having studied, Architecture," and having from her "own whimsical Plan, built a House in Dorchester." This building was situated on Dudley Street, nearly across from the James Swan House. Perez Morton had bought the site in 1794 and added to it in two subsequent purchases.² Under the name of the Taylor Mansion, from a later owner, the house stood nearly a century, until it was taken down in 1891 to make room for newer buildings. Mrs. Morton's study of architecture, probably under her cousin, Charles Bulfinch, designer of the national capitol and the state houses of Maine and Massachusetts, must have been to good advantage, for the building was often spoken of as one of the finest old New England houses. Its distinguishing feature was the drawing room, oval in shape, of a type affected by Bulfinch.³

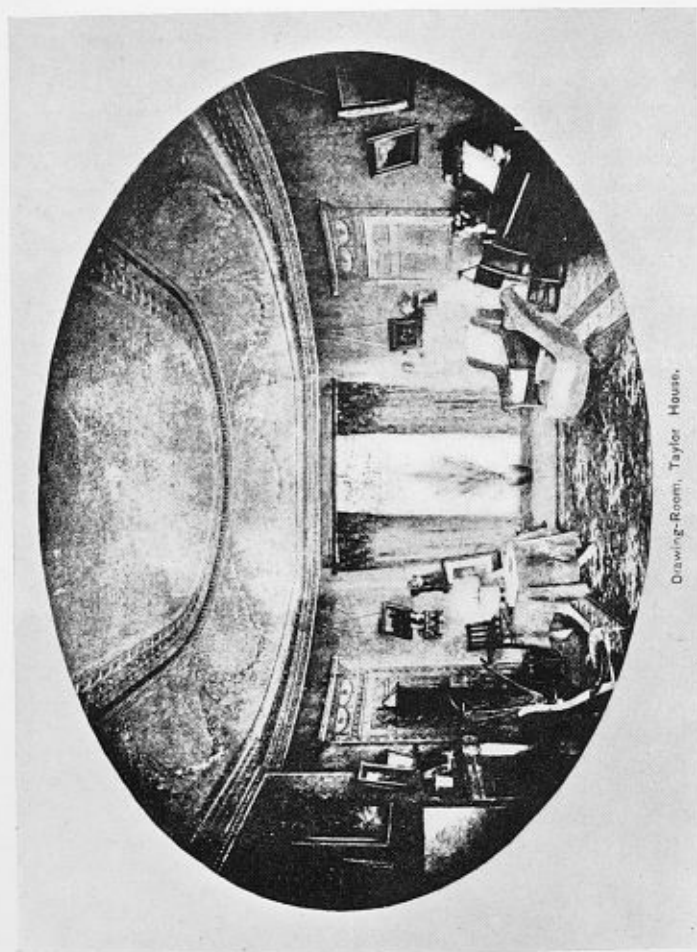
As described shortly before its demolition,⁴ the house occupied spacious grounds, surrounded by borders of shrubbery. Above it rose tall, majestic elms. A flight of broad stone steps led up to the entrance, where a heavy door swung on its hinges, admitting the visitor to a large hall.

¹See p. 72, below.

²Norfolk County Deeds, Lib. 3, Fol. 159; Lib. 16, Fol. 142-3.

³Place, Charles A., *Charles Bulfinch, Architect and Builder*, p. 156. See the illustration of this room, facing this page.

⁴McBride, Marion A., "Some Old Dorchester Houses," in the *New England Magazine*, May, 1890, pp. 314-317. The ensuing passage is quoted from her description. This article is the source for Brayley's account in the *Bostonian*, October, 1894.



Drawing-Room, Taylor House.

This entrance-hall is imposing, with its dim light, which comes from a broad window halfway up the staircase, which is located on the left of the entrance, and forms one of the picturesque features of the house. Passing beneath an arch of great artistic beauty, a broad passage leads to the long French windows which open upon the balcony, and one can in fancy see the grand dames who swept along these corridors, breathing the perfumed air from the gardens, touched without doubt during the long summer days by a breath of east wind from Dorchester Bay. Returning to the interior, one ascends the staircase, to be charmed by the ease of ascent; for the stairs are ideal in construction, low and broad, and the balustrade is of rose-wood, rich with the colors of a century, while along the centre line there is a delicate tracery of inlaid wood, exquisite in form and tone. Above . . . there is a ceiling design, unique, elaborate, and beautiful, which for symmetry it would be difficult to find a counterpart. The work is stucco, and the odd fancies are finely wrought in odd corners, which the rambling lines of the upper rooms compel. In the entrance-hall again we have directly in front of us folding doors opening into the breakfast room, which is bright and sunny, being lighted by a large bay-window . . .

Along the cornice is thrown a fine carved tracery. The lower half of the wall space is panelled, and the border corresponds to the cornice in design and workmanship. At the right of the entrance-hall we enter the dining-room, a long, handsome room, lighted by a bay-window on each side. The cornice is very elaborate and high-fitted with folding lines, particularly wrought in the corners, which the rambling lines of the upper rooms compel.

by the
mythology
The dra

group
shield

This entrance-hall is imposing, with its dim light, which comes from a broad window halfway up the staircase, which is located on the left of the entrance, and forms one of the picturesque features of the house. Passing beneath an arch of great artistic beauty, a broad passage leads to the long French windows which open upon the balcony, and one can in fancy see the grand dames who swept along these corridors, breathing the perfumed air from the gardens, touched without doubt during the long summer days by a breath of east wind from Dorchester Bay. Returning to the interior, one ascends the staircase, to be charmed by the ease of ascent; for the stairs are ideal in construction, low and broad, and the balustrade is of rose-wood, rich with the colors of a century, while along the centre line there is a delicate tracery of inlaid wood, exquisite in form and tone. Above . . . there is a ceiling design, unique, elaborate, and beautiful, which for symmetry it would be difficult to find a counterpart. The work is stucco, and the odd fancies are finely wrought in odd corners, which the rambling lines of the upper rooms compel. In the entrance-hall again we have directly in front of us folding doors opening into the breakfast room, which is bright and sunny, being lighted by a large bay-window . . .

Along the cornice is thrown a fine carved tracery. The lower half of the wall space is panelled, and the border corresponds to the cornice in design and workmanship. At the right of the entrance-hall we enter the dining-hall, a long, handsome room, lighted by five windows reaching to the floor. The cornice is very elaborate here, and the long windows are wide and high, fitted with folding inside blinds, secured in a primitive but effective fashion, particularly in the front windows, which open upon tiny balconies of wrought iron, which show a graceful fancy, developed in the black lines which are now curiously coated with rust. Opposite the dining-room is a library, with quaint mantel carvings, fluted pilasters surmounted by figures of Bacchus and Ceres, while above the door-posts other mythological figures pose . . .

The drawing-room occupies the center of the second floor, presenting one of the finest interiors to be found in this part of the country. The vaulted ceiling is elaborately decorated in stucco, while the cornice bears deep-cut designs in conventional form. Doors and casings bear the graceful drooping garlands which everywhere mark the decorative treatment of colonial days. This drawing-room seems fitted for hospitality, and there is a charming touch of patriotism displayed in the ornamentation of the door-posts, whose caps are made in panel form, bearing upon the centre space an emblematic group consisting of the American eagle standing guard over the shield, about which are garlands of laurel. The front parlor is long, lighted by a large bay-window, which overlooks the grounds and driveway; while the back parlor opens by long French windows upon a bewitching nook, in balcony form, from which one can look into

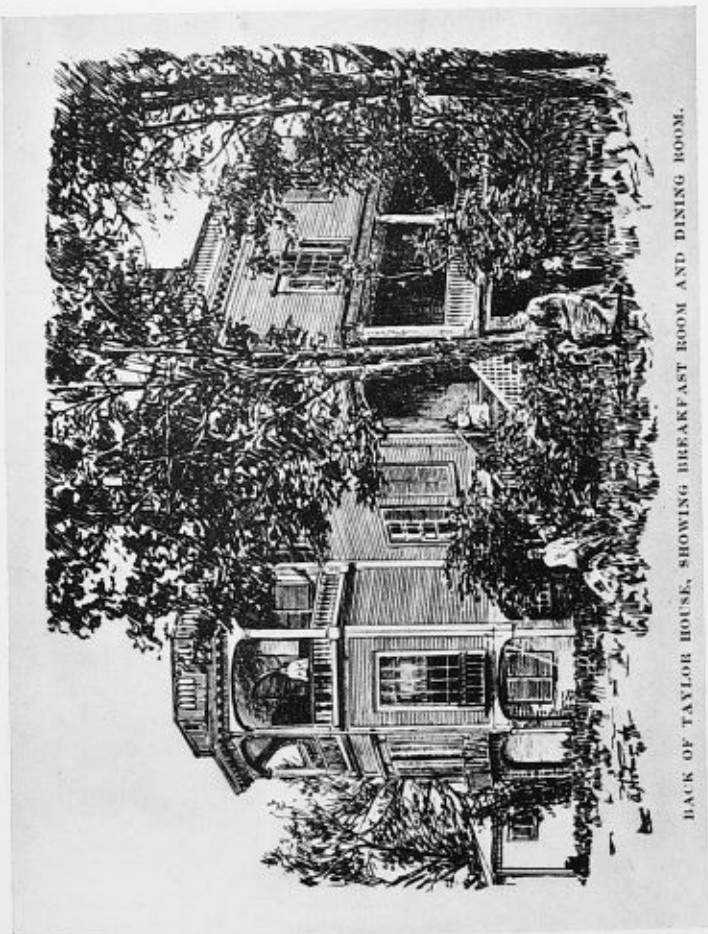
birds' nests and the dense foliage of grand old trees. These parlors are flanked by square rooms on either side, and a very romantic thing it is to visit some of these cosy, odd-shaped rooms, which can be accomplished by mounting a back staircase from the small square hall between the breakfast and dining rooms on the first floor. Following along a dark passage until a group of doors is reached, we come to a suite of pretty rooms on the second floor; but mounting another flight of stairs, we follow along a passage which tells very plainly that we are under the eaves. There are deep closets here which would delight any housekeeper, and we pass several deep recesses before we reach the door which opens into a veritable "sky parlor." This room is about ten by sixteen feet, built up square on the roof, lighted by four large windows; there are floods of sunshine pouring in here from morning till night; and the view over the tree tops is grand, as we can see beyond the tossing foliage the deep blue of the sea, dotted by white sails and occasional darker lines of smoke, which mark an out-going steamer . . .

This room was evidently a pet sanctum for somebody, for in one corner there is a fireplace, faced with the old English printed tile, showing a slightly toned background, upon which are quaint vases and pictures developed in deep green tones, with heavy and distinct shadings. The iron fire-dogs and low fenders are of classic design.

This room Miss McBride fancies to have been Mrs. Morton's favorite retreat; and the conjecture seems reasonable, though the time when Philenia occupied it was considerably later than she supposes.

In her new home Mrs. Morton was undoubtedly better able to entertain her guests than in the presumably limited quarters available in the Apthorp-Morton house after the forming of the Union Bank. Dorchester was at that time an attractive village to which many families of wealth, such as the Swans, had turned for country residences. One of her first guests was Joseph Dennie, the editor and essayist, an old friend. Early in 1797, Dennie presented Mrs. Morton with a volume of his *Lay Preacher* essays, published the year before at Walpole, New Hampshire, where he was then conducting the *Farmers' Weekly Museum*. Her gracious and friendly letter of acknowledgment, preserved in the *Dennie Papers*, is the most interesting extant example of her correspondence. She wrote:

To you, my worthy Friend, am I indebted for two Hours of Amusement and Instruction, received thru the Medium of a little Book, which leaves us Nothing to regret but its Brevity. Indeed



BACK OF TAYLOR HOUSE, SHOWING BREAKFAST ROOM AND DINING ROOM.

I have expressed more to Others, than I would choose to repeat to yourself, respecting your literary Productions: and I am most happy to find you do not bury your Talents in a Napkin—A periodical Publication, truly classic, such as I had never hoped to find under the Denomination of a "News Paper," confirms this Assurance, and I am every Day gratified with hearing it spoken of and commended.

Yet you must not presume to flatter yourself with being distinguished as the only Author; for Mrs. Murry [sic] has given out Proposals for printing by Subscription 600 Pages of "The Gleaner"!!! This Intelligence, I conclude, cannot fail to be interesting to you—but seriously, my Friend, your *Vocation is Writing*, yet you must not be unmindful of the social Obligations, but spare some Time for Conversation, and personal Intercourse.

For my Part, I am practicing, without having studied, Architecture, and have, from my own whimsical Plan, built a House in Dorchester, where I will promise you a Variety of Prospects enchanting, and poetical—a pure Air—and a Reception of Friendship and Hospitality, with which Assurance I conclude this *Melange*, which was intended for a Letter.

Adieu. Happiness and Success attend you

S Morton

March 27th 1797

You may be very certain Mr. Morton did not omit his Compliments, and good Wishes, tho I neglected to insert them in the proper Place—accept them now and be convinced of our Friendship.

Mr. Joseph Denny [sic]

Dennie, in forwarding the letter to his mother, 26 April, 1797, wrote concerning it:⁵

I send you a few letters from some of my correspondents, because they may, in some degree, convince you that tho' rude and savage America does not reward Literature, the few are willing to flatter a Student. Mr Eliot* & Mrs Morton have ever been zealous in my behalf, & their exertions have been more than to weave the complimentary period.

The invitation contained in her letter was accepted by Dennie on a visit to Lexington, Boston, and Dorchester in the following August. In two letters written to his friend Jeremiah Mason at

⁵Dennie Papers.

*Samuel Eliot (1740-1820), a prominent Boston merchant, whose father of the same name was for a time editor of the *American Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Boston, in 1743.

Portsmouth, New Hampshire, during this visit, Dennie several times refers to Mrs. Morton in terms of jocular compliment. On 6 August, he wrote:

I have lounged on the sofa of Philenia & have darted Federalism at her French spouse.

The "French spouse" is undoubtedly an allusion to Morton's supposed pro-French sympathies. In the letter of 25 August, he writes:

I pass most of my time at M's., & visit Geo. Cabot & J. Swan. Jews and Gentiles, you will say; true. Men of all party colors; but no low people, Jere, no hewers of wood or drawers of water.

The "M" to whom he refers as his host is probably Morton, though it may possibly be George R. Minot, whom he had earlier mentioned to his mother along with Mrs. Morton as "among my warmest partizans."

Mrs. Morton's friendly entertainment of Dennie was characteristic of her familiar and encouraging attitude toward numerous young writers of both sexes. Her social interests and the frankness of her friendship for these young persons doubtless gave rise, as it always does, to some criticism by her more serious-minded neighbors. When William Dunlap, the dramatist and theatrical manager of New York, came to Boston on a visit at the end of 1797, he recorded in his gossip diary on 25 November:⁷

Miss [Margaret] Morton⁸ tells me y^t Mrs. Morton is not much respected in private life, but y^e contrary; but Mrs. Brown my landlady⁹ says she is a very clever woman.

On 2 December, he corrects this opinion in the following entry:¹⁰

This good lady, Mrs. Brown, gives a good character of Mrs. Morton as an amiable domestic Woman, her husband is Perez Mor-

⁷Diary of William Dunlap, vol. 1, p. 174.

⁸Of New York; no relation to Perez Morton.

⁹Possibly Elizabeth (Hill) Brown, mother of William Hill Brown, since Dunlap says her residence was on State Street.

¹⁰Dunlap, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 177.

ton, a lawyer & democrat. Cooper¹¹ laughs at his talking so much of himself at his house & attributes it to the wine. Evening read Voltaire.

Dunlap also records having purchased and read Mrs. Morton's *Ouâbi* and *Beacon Hill*. Of the latter he recorded:¹²

I was displeased with y^e beginning but afterwards found much to admire:

and of the former, that it gave him much more pleasure than he had expected.¹³

In 1799, having apparently received little encouragement to complete the original design of *Beacon Hill* in five books, Mrs. Morton published as a separate poem that portion dealing with the fortunes of Lady Acland (spelled *Ackland* by Mrs. Morton) and her husband. To this she gave a title matching that of *Ouâbi*, namely, *The Virtues of Society: A Tale Founded on Fact*. It was printed by Manning and Loring, Boston, who had published *Beacon Hill* for her. The title page bears the ascription to "The Author of the Virtues of Nature"; and, as in the case of *Ouâbi*, a quotation gives a hint as to the contents of the poem:

Those tender charities, that tie
In mutual league the human heart.
Cartwright.

In the dedication to Mrs. Adams, advantage is taken of the opportunity to praise highly both that lady and her husband. In an "advertisement" following the dedication, the author says that she now ventures to show that virtues are not confined to the rude and uncultivated savage but are also found in the members of civilized society. Concerning the incident recounted in the poem, she writes:

The subject, founded upon a pathetic occurrence of the American Revolution, is principally selected from a little book, containing letters of General Burgoyne: deeply affected by the interesting recital, the Author has not despaired of inspiring the same sympathy

¹¹Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, the celebrated actor.

¹²Dunlap, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 195.

in others; and, under that impression, again presumes to appear before the public tribunal.

Like her other long poem, *The Virtues of Society* is written in iambic pentameter couplets. The story, briefly, is this: Harriet, a charming young English girl, high-born, beautiful, and accomplished, is courted by Major Ackland.¹⁴ They are married; and against the advice of their parents she accompanies him to Canada, where his regiment is to oppose the Colonials. Soon after their arrival, the camp is aroused by a night attack. In the ensuing battle, Major Ackland is wounded and captured. The next night, Harriet, having learned of her husband's fate, seeks and obtains permission from the English general to go to the American lines in search of him. Though the night is stormy, the sailors carry her in a small boat down the river. Deafened by the storm, they do not hear the challenge of the sentinel, who fires, wounding Harriet in the arm. They are obliged to wait until morning before seeing the American general, but there is then little delay in sending Harriet to her husband. She nurses him to health; and after they are set free, they return to England.

Mrs. Morton's description of Harriet, as perhaps exemplifying her ideal of womanly charms and accomplishments, is worthy of being quoted:¹⁵

HARRIET, the titled grace of Britain's shore,
A high-born nymph in lordly nuptials bore,
Her form, by nature's cunning hand array'd,
Each blending beauty of her soul portray'd,
The modest blush, the genius-speaking eye,
The thrilling smile of blest benignity,
Where chaste, attractive, elegance combined
A cherub's softness with an angel's mind.

The description goes on to paint her as talented in dancing, harp-playing, singing, and painting; well-informed in almost every branch of knowledge; and kind and benevolent to the destitute and the sorrowing. This poem illustrates the same stylistic qualities as

¹⁴The chief historical characters in the poem are Major John Dyke Ackland, d. 1778, and his wife, Lady Christian Henrietta Caroline (1750-1815), daughter of Stephen, first earl of Ilchester.

¹⁵*Virtues of Society*, page 6.

Beacon Hill, including epic similes and several references to classic literature.

In the same volume with *The Virtues of Society* was printed an irregular ode "To Time." In subject it is conventional, enumerating the great empires and emperors that have yielded to the sway of time. Next it pauses to pay tribute to Columbia and to John Adams, then President.

Even thus Columbia, o'er whose growing plains,
Chief of her choice, her GREAT CIVILIAN reigns ;
Of guiding genius, and controlling hand,
Firm to resolve, and gentle to command :
DECIDED PATRIOT ! Time for thee prepares
A crown, uncantered by the rust of years ;
Haloed by stars, whose varying rays entwine :
The gift is glory, but the grace is thine.
While withering millions on far Europe's shore
Gaze on thy rights, and all their wrongs deplore.¹⁶

As reprinted in *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, this poem is considerably altered and is divided into two separate odes.¹⁷

Mrs. Morton's father, James Apthorp, Esq., died at the family residence in Quincy on 10 November, 1799, at the age of sixty-eight years. After the funeral services at his home his body was taken to Boston and interred in the family vault under King's Chapel. Doubtless because the latter church had become Unitarian, the funeral sermon was delivered by Dr. Samuel Parker, the rector of Trinity.

Charles Ward Apthorp Morton, Mrs. Morton's only son, entered Harvard at thirteen and was graduated in 1804, after a brilliant career.¹⁸ To his mother he was a "prodigy of genius." He was devoted to intense study, which tended to undermine a naturally feeble constitution. Like his sister Charlotte, he was talented in poetry, music, and painting, but was chiefly interested in the natural sciences. According to Mrs. Morton, he "made Improvements in Medical Electricity; for which he received a Certificate from the President and Professors of Harvard Uni-

¹⁶M.M.I.T. version, p. 107.

¹⁷M.M.I.T., pp. 105-7 and 107-9, respectively.

¹⁸This discrepancy in dates, since he was born in 1786, may indicate that young Morton's college career was interrupted by illness.

versity."¹⁹ During the college days and after his graduation, she watched with a mother's agonized concern, mingled with pride, his further study, carried on against increasing bodily weakness and suffering.

After the *Virtues of Society*, most of Mrs. Morton's poems were composed in honor of public occasions or prominent personages, for church or other celebrations, and as tributes to hosts, hostesses, and other friends. Such poems, in the 1790's, include her lines "To the Memory of the Hon. Mr. Bowdoin,"²⁰ two tributes to John Jay,²¹ and an "Ode for Music" written in honor of Washington's visit to Boston during his presidency.²² John Adams's retirement to Braintree, after his defeat by Jefferson in 1800, called forth her "Stanzas Written on a Social Visit to the Retired Patriot John Adams Late President of the United States."²³ Several of her hymns, including the two written for the celebration of the Lord's Supper at the First Church in Dorchester,²⁴ belong also to the Dorchester period of residence.

In 1800 Mr. Morton was returned to the House of Representatives from Dorchester and continued to serve in the lower branch of the General Court until 1811.²⁵ The Boston proprietors of lands in the so-called Yazoo Purchase of public lands in the State of Georgia also selected him about 1800 as their representative for conveying certain petitions to President Jefferson. In pursuance of this task, he spent the winters of 1802-3 and 1803-4 at Washington, in fruitless efforts to secure favorable action by Congress.²⁶

On one or both of these occasions, Mrs. Morton accompanied him. Mementos of her stay in Philadelphia and Washington are her "Song," written at the Woodlands, the seat of Wm. Hamilton, Esq. upon the Schuylkill;²⁷ her "Inscriptions" for a sarcophagus

¹⁹M.M.I.T., note on page 281, from which this sketch is taken.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 253.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 139, 140.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 137.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 194.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 242, 243.

²⁵Noble, *op. cit.*, p. 291, note.

²⁶J. Q. Adams ("Publius Valerius"), letter in the *Repertory*, Boston, 30 Oct., 1804. Quoted in C. W. Ford's *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 52.

and an arbor upon his estate;²⁸ her "Stanzas" to the British Ambassador, Robert Liston;²⁹ her lines "To Lewis Hervey, Esq., Secretary of the Presidency";³⁰ and her "Second Address" to a glove.³¹ This last may be quoted as almost the sole instance of humorous verse in her work. The occasion was a set of "Lines,"³² written by an admirer, lamenting the fate of a discarded glove of Philenia's, and closing with these words:

At last, in plaister, or in string,
Or cleaning plate, your days may end;
Who then will think that such a thing,
POOR GLOVE! was e'er Philenia's friend!

Philenia's rejoinder follows:

No—not in string, nor plaister base,
But round some tall *preserving jar*,³³
This glove, the luckiest of his race,
Shall catch the *Gourmand's* glance afar!
And all his envious passions move,
The raspberry's luscious jam to greet,
The ruby of the peach to prove,
Or crab, as peach, or raspberry sweet.
Or gooseberry—with its blending tart,—
Or the plump cherry's scarlet heart,
Which more than maiden blushes move
The *science* of his taste to love.

The sugared fruit within thy care,
May more his tempted thought beguile,
Than bashful beauty's timid air,
Or balmy infant's gladdening smile;
If lovely bride, or babe of glee,
Were his, who wastes his verse on thee.

Then, lucky glove, exulting go,
And as in "*sweets*" thy day arose,
In sweets its latest hour shall close,
Sweets, that in kind succession flow.
Young beauty shall exulting see,

²⁸M.M.I.T., p. 77.

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 83.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

And bend her graceful neck to thee;
 While her excelling fingers twine,
 Around each parted arm of thine;
 Unconscious of its fairer days,
 Will boast the worth that AGE displays,
 And give thy hoarded sweets her praise.

On one of these visits she sat for her portrait to the noted painter Gilbert Stuart, at Philadelphia. Stuart painted three portraits, of which one was never finished. In this last portrait her hands are lifted above her head, in the act of raising her veil, from under which she gazes at the beholder. The completed head in this portrait has given rise to the comment by one critic that "both in coloring and expression it is a poetic suggestion of life itself, radiant and vivacious and passing like a breeze."³⁴ This painting remained in Stuart's possession and was found in his studio after his death.

The best of his three portraits, considered one of his finest masterpieces, is thus described:³⁵

She is shown seated, three-quarters left, in an armchair upholstered in red, with her dark brown eyes directed to the spectator. Her chestnut hair, parted, is worn high on top of her head and low in the neck, and in ringlets on forehead and temples . . . She wears a black, low-cut, short-sleeved dress, the neck trimmed with a filmy edging of white tulle, and the sleeves with a frill of the same material, caught up with a small red stone ornament. About her, and covering the chair arm, is a scarf of thin material of greens and brownish-yellows. Her left hand and arm are unconcealed; the hand with the fingers slightly spread, and with a ring upon the third finger, is resting upon the edge of a mahogany table, on which are two books.

This portrait shows that at the age of forty she was a singularly beautiful woman, with features of great delicacy and refinement. Her family were greatly pleased with it; and she expressed her

³⁴Apparently she intended her discarded gloves to be used as we use preserve-jar rubbers.

³⁵*Bulletin of Worcester Art Museum*, July, 1915.

³⁶For excellent reproductions of the three portraits see Lawrence Park's *Gilbert Stuart*, Vol. IV, pp. 340, 341, 342 (Nos. 561, 562, 563), and for descriptive notes concerning them, including that quoted above, Vol. II, pp. 534-38. See also Mason, G. C.: *The Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart*, p.



UNFINISHED PORTRAIT OF MRS. MORTON

Found in Gilbert Stuart's Studio after his Death.
 In possession of the Worcester Art Museum

gratitude to the artist in a poem printed in the *Port Folio*, 18 June, 1803, concluding in the following lines:³⁶

E'en me, by no enlivening grace array'd,
Me, born to linger in affliction's shade,
Hast thou, kind artist, with attraction drest,
With all that Nature in my soul express'd.

Dennie ("Samuel Saunter"), who was editor of the magazine, prefaced these verses with a eulogy upon Stuart and the portrait. Stuart, who was somewhat of a poet as well as artist, immediately replied in a poem "To Mrs. M. . . .," containing these lines:³⁷

Nor wonder, if in tracing charms like thine,
Thought and expression blend a rich design:
'Twas heaven itself that blended in thy face,
The lines of Reason with the lines of Grace:
'Twas heaven that bade the swift idea rise,
Paint thy soft cheek, and sparkle in thine eyes:
Invention *there* could justly claim no part,
I only boast the copyist's humble art.

The third portrait is a replica of the second, with slight differences in costume, posture, and head-dress, and the addition of a bust of Washington in the background.

The most important literary magazine in New England during the first decade of the nineteenth century, rivaling Dennie's *Port Folio* at Philadelphia, was the *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*. This was conducted at Boston from 1803 to 1811 by the Anthology Club, a group of young men of Boston and Cambridge, among whom Emerson's father, the Reverend William Emerson, was a leading spirit. The Club had frequent meetings, at which articles submitted were assigned to different members for discussion and criticism. In June, 1804, Mrs. Morton's "Reanimation, a Hymn for the Humane Society," in a revised form, was reprinted in the magazine. At the meeting on Thursday, 19 June, 1806,³⁸

³⁶This poem re-appears in *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, pp. 74-6, but the impersonal pronoun takes the place of the personal one.

³⁷*Port Folio*, Vol. III, 1803, p. 185.

³⁸*Journal of Proceedings* of the Anthology Society, p. 78.

Mr. W. Welles³⁹ read a piece by Mrs. Morton on Mr. Parsons' accepting the Chief Justiceship of Massachusetts, this was "good and bad together" and was given to Mr. Gardiner for alteration.

This poem, deploring Parson's relinquishment of his brilliant legal practice for a judgeship, as altered by the Reverend John Sylvester John Gardiner, appeared in the June, 1806 issue of the *Anthology*. At the meeting on 30 October, Mr. Shaw⁴⁰ read a piece of poetry on "Poverty," by Mrs. Morton, which was accepted.⁴¹ This "Ode to Poverty" appeared in the November issue, over the new pseudonym, Cambria, indicative of the poetess' pride in her Welsh ancestry. The same pen-name was used for the "Song of the Runic Bard," in November, 1807.

In the autumn of 1806, Mrs. Morton wrote a "Dedicatory Hymn," at the request of members of the West Boston Meeting House.⁴² This hymn was sung at the dedication exercises on 27 November. In it she lauds the former ministers of the church, the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew, and his successor Dr. Simeon Howard, and shows her esteem for the new pastor, the Reverend Charles Lowell, father of the poet, James Russell Lowell. The hymn was also struck off as a broadside, being designed, with the omission of the stanzas referring to Mayhew, Howard, and Lowell, for general use in churches. The tolerant religious outlook shown in the writing of this hymn for a Unitarian meetinghouse found notable expression in her poem, "The Sabbath," "occasioned by the sarcastic question of a fellow traveller, 'Can you worship out of the pale of your own church?'"⁴³ and in her "Stanzas in Honor of Bishop Cheverus, First Primate of the Roman Catholic Church in New England."⁴⁴

In 1806 Perez Morton was elected Speaker of the lower house in the General Court of Massachusetts. He was re-elected in 1807 and again, after two years' intermission in 1810 and 1811. This honor was doubtless gratifying to the Mortons, enhanced

³⁹William Welles.

⁴⁰William Smith Shaw (1778-1826).

⁴¹*Journal of Proceedings*, p. 93.

⁴²*M.M.I.T.*, pp. 238-9.

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 234 and 278 n.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 244-5.

their social prestige, and brought still other distinguished guests to the Dudley Street mansion.

Two letters, one from Charlotte Morton to Mrs. Henry Knox, at the latter's estate, "Montpelier," and the other from Mrs. Morton to Mrs. Knox's daughter, Mrs. Ebenezer Thacher, dated 15 August, 1806, and 29 May, 1807, respectively, relate to visits between the two families. General Knox, after retiring from the Cabinet, had removed to Lincoln (now Knox) County, in Maine, where he held extensive grants of land, and where the family now lived in baronial fashion at their stately residence in Thomaston. Charlotte's letter refers to a recent visit by Mrs. Knox, and her mother's is in acknowledgment of an invitation to visit "Montpelier" in the summer of 1807. The journey to Thomaston, doubtless made by sea in the company of Mr. Thacher, must have been a pleasant diversion for Mrs. Morton and Charlotte. The death of the General in October, 1806, called forth a "Monody to the Memory of General Knox"⁴⁵ from the pen of Philenia, in which she praised him as⁴⁶

With all of nature's gift, and fortune's claim,
A soul of honour, and a life of fame;
A warrior-chief in victory's field renowned,
A statesman with the wreath of virtue crowned.

The first marriage among Mrs. Morton's children was that of the youngest daughter, Charlotte, who was united on 21 June, 1808, to Andrew Dexter (1779-1837), of a prominent Rhode Island family. She was a beautiful and vivacious girl, who resembled her mother in character and charm. In the year of her marriage, her portrait was painted by Stuart, together with one of her husband. Charlotte's portrait, in which only the face was done by Stuart, shows her blue eyes directed toward the spectator and her golden hair in close waves and ringlets around her head. She wore a white Empire gown, high-waisted and low-cut, with short puffed sleeves, and a blue scarf fallen from her shoulders over her arms.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Not, she informed Mrs. Thacher, the "Monody" which had appeared in the *Monthly Anthology*, December, 1806.

⁴⁶*M.M.I.T.*, p. 256.

⁴⁷Park, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 286.

Andrew Dexter was a young man of pleasing appearance and manners, decided talents, and unlimited ambition. He had been graduated from Brown University in 1796 and admitted to the bar in 1800, but had relinquished the law to engage on a large scale in real estate development in Boston.⁴⁸ It is likely that Morton was interested in his investments and projects. At the time of the marriage, his holdings had mounted to sums estimated in hundreds of thousands of dollars, and Charlotte's parents doubtless looked forward to a happy and prosperous life for their favored daughter.

An interesting compliment was paid to Mrs. Morton at the height of her career by the Maine novelist, Mrs. Sarah Barrell Keating. In her romance *Julia and the Illuminated Baron*, published at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1800, she has one of her characters, a young Englishman named Colwort, call upon "the darling daughter of the Muses" during a visit to Boston, and describe her thus:⁴⁹

... Mrs. Morton is still a very lovely woman, though she is the mother of a considerable family of children, and has grown-up daughters; her Beacon-hill, an epic poem that I have read before I left England, is enough to place her in the first grade of poets, but I have since I come [sic] here, seen some little fugitive pieces, that are softer, and I think brighter effusions of genius.

On 27 September, 1803, Mr. Morton had raised the sum of \$14,100 by mortgaging his Dudley Street property to his brother, Joseph Morton.⁵⁰ There is no record that this mortgage was ever discharged. On 7 July, 1808, Joseph Morton sold the estate for \$15,000 to Cornelius Coolidge. A phrase in the deed, describing the property as "late in the improvement of Perez Morton" indicates that before that time the family had taken up residence elsewhere.

⁴⁸Dexter Genealogy.

⁴⁹*Julia and the Illuminated Baron*, pp. 81-82.

⁵⁰Clapp, David, "The Old Morton and Taylor Estates in Dorchester," *N.E.H.G.R.*, Vol. XLVI, p. 79.

CHAPTER VI

THE LATTER YEARS: "MY MIND AND ITS THOUGHTS" 1808-1846

On 23 February, 1780, shortly before Mrs. Morton's marriage, her grandmother, Grizzell (Eastwicke) Apthorp, had settled upon her by deed a certain piece of property in Bowdoin Square, Boston, adjoining Cambridge Street and Green Lane. This property Mrs. Morton sold on 10 September, 1798, for \$5,000 to Harrison Gray Otis.¹ The proceeds she applied to the acquisition of a tract of land in Dorchester, at what was known as Allen's Plain, fronting on Pleasant Street and adjoining Stoughton Street. This land had been forfeited by its former owner and was held in trusteeship apparently until 26 May, 1816, when it was deeded by William Sullivan, Esquire, trustee, to Mrs. Morton.²

Here the Mortons had probably been living since 1808 at the latest, in a house which was locally known as the "Pavilion." According to family tradition, Perez Morton erected the house before his wife had any knowledge of his intentions. If so, his architectural ideas must have differed widely from hers, for the "Pavilion" was much more original and romantic in its conception than the dwelling on Dudley Street. It was said to have been constructed in imitation of buildings in countries where hurricanes are frequent. Its appearance in after years is thus described by Mr. Clapp:³

The house, according to my imperfect recollection of the details of a familiar object seen daily from infancy, comprised an extensive square lower or ground story, with a broad piazza in front. A second story, still smaller in floor surface, rested symmetrically on the centre of the first, with both stories low studded. It was a common report in my boyhood, that another story still smaller in extent once crowned this second story. . . . The building, as now remembered, had the appearance of having been painted of a dark greyish color.

¹Suffolk County Registry of Deeds.

²*Ibid.*

³Clapp, David, *op. cit.*, p. 83 n.

Another elderly resident of Dorchester recalled its "strangely unique" appearance, attracting the attention of passersby by "its novelty and quaintness."⁴ It is probably the view from this house that Mrs. Morton praises in the first stanza of her "Rustic Lines, upon Returning to the Beloved Hamlet of Dorchester," after some visit to a crowded city:

... thy tranquil scene
Of plains—in early herbage green;
Thy near hills bordering bold and wild,
The temper of the breezes mild—
Thine ocean blue as beauty's eye.⁵

From an early date, Mrs. Morton's poems refer to her life as shadowed by disappointments, losses, and griefs, which frequently rendered her ill and incapable of literary endeavors. One source of disappointment was doubtless the decreased acclaim with which her poetry was received. Like Freneau, she was destined to live long after her reputation as a poetess had been eclipsed by younger rivals, notably by the facile and saccharine lyrics of Mrs. Lydia Huntley Sigourney. Paine and Dennie, her contemporaries who had been her staunchest admirers, had died within a few weeks of each other, in November, 1811, and January, 1812, respectively; and the powers and activities of both had declined some years before their deaths. Their loss of social reputation during their somewhat dissipated later years is probably the reason why no tributes by Mrs. Morton to their passing are preserved. In their place, she turned for criticism to a learned gentleman of the cloth, who is most likely to have been the Reverend John Sylvester John Gardiner, Rector of Trinity, Boston, a sound scholar and judge of letters. To him, as a member of the *Anthology* group, had been assigned the revision of one of her poems, and he is likely to have been the "Conon" who had criticized the morals of *Ouâbi*. To him is possibly due the increased firmness of texture, adequacy of rhythm, and clarity of expression in her latest poems.

Perhaps the crowning bereavement of her lifetime was the death of her only son, Charles, on 28 February, 1809. His whole

⁴William B. Trask, in Orcutt's *Good Old Dorchester*, p. 400.
⁵*M.M.I.T.*, p. xix.

existence had been one of suffering, but his affectionate, noble, and sincere nature and his unblemished character had endeared him to many besides his mother. His death was caused by "a Dropsy of the Brain, a disease," as Mrs. Morton wrote in self-consolation, "always accompanied by premature but extraordinary capacity."⁶ For a time she was inconsolable and unable to believe his loss real. When the boy's remains were interred under King's Chapel, she at first refused to have the vault sealed up, and during

Eight lorn days of speechless horror⁷

spent the daylight hours near his body "under the desperate possibility that life was not wholly extinguished."⁸ On one of the days, as she passed into the under aisle, a single raindrop fell upon her

... as if an angel's eye
Gazing upon this form of woe,
Had melted to its murmured sigh.⁹

Besides the poem in which this incident is described, three other verse tributes to her son are grouped together in *My Mind and Its Thoughts*. The finest, and one of the most eloquent of all her utterances, is "Lamentations of an Unfortunate Mother over the Tomb of her Only Son," from which the following lines are quoted:¹⁰

Poor Boy! I thought thou o'er my urn would'st weep!
And grieving yield me to the tomb's last sleep;
Nor, in the dawn of years, when hope was gay,
Like heaven's bright arch of promise, melt away—
Lost, like a sun-beam in the spring's chill hours,
And transient as the garden's earliest flowers.

To an increasing degree after this event, Mrs. Morton found consolation in religion and in nature. The poetry of her contem-

⁶*M.M.I.T.*, p. 281 n.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 263, "Stanzas, Occasioned by the Question of a Friend, 'What has preserved you?'"

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 282 n.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 262, "Stanzas."

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 261.

poraries Wordsworth and Bryant, though she never mentions them, may have influenced her in the latter direction. In the Introduction to *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, written in 1822, she says of herself:¹¹

... rustic and recluse, the trees of the hamlet have been her most instructive companions, and while that earth so beautifully shadowed by these, gave strength, activity, and employment to the limbs, and to the understanding; she laboured in her vocation, not with the pretension of a theoretic, and yet less with that of a scientific Botanist, but simply *Avec L'amour des Jardins*, and in burying care, has reaped contentment sufficient to console the heart for its worldly losses, and leavings; until the love of rural scenery became a real passion—probably the only passion, in which it is possible to indulge, without censure or self-reproach.

Another disaster during this year was the business failure of Andrew Dexter, her new son-in-law, for an amount placed at \$1,200,000. It is likely that some of Perez Morton's wealth went in the crash, since the inventoried valuation of his and his wife's estates is small in comparison with that of his Boston property alone as assessed in 1798.¹² Dexter removed to Nova Scotia, thence returning to the United States after some years, to Athens, in central New York. In 1816 he migrated to Alabama, where he is said to have founded the city of Montgomery.¹³

On 29 August of this year, the eldest of Mrs. Morton's daughters, Sarah Apthorp Morton, was married to Richard Cunningham, Esquire. She was remembered in the wills of both her parents with especial affection. The Cunninghams lived in Windsor, Nova Scotia, but she and some of her children returned to Dorchester; and from them are derived all the descendants of Perez and Sarah Morton now living in the vicinity of Boston.

In September, 1810, the Attorney-General of Massachusetts, one Bidwell, "absconded." Thereupon, Governor Elbridge Gerry, a Democrat, appointed Perez Morton to fill the vacancy. The *Columbian Centinel* of Wednesday, 5 September, 1810, reports the Governor's nomination, which was to be acted upon by the

¹¹p. xvi.

¹²*Boston Town Records*, vol. 22, pp. 176, 296, 425.

¹³Park, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 285. *The Encyc. Britannica* says that Samuel Dexter founded the city in 1817, as New Philadelphia.



PEREZ MORTON, ESQ.

From a Photographic Reproduction of a Portrait, in the Speaker's Room of the State House, Boston

Council on the following Friday. It is to be presumed that the Council acted favorably, for the records of the House of Representatives of 23 January, 1811, read as follows:¹⁴

As soon as the House was called to order, the Clerk read a letter from the Honorable Perez Morton, informing the House of his appointment as Attorney-General, and the consequent constitutional vacation of his office as speaker of the House.

Mr. Morton served in this position until 1832. As Attorney-General, Morton now occupied a permanent position of prominence in the commonwealth, which was undoubtedly a source of extreme satisfaction to his wife and children.

The last mention of Mrs. Morton in connection with the Anthology Society is the record of assigning *Beacon Hill* to the President on 18 April, 1809, for a "retrospective review."¹⁵ Although her poetic output was now lessened, the War of 1812 stimulated her to the production of several patriotic verses inscribed to national heroes. Among these were her "Ode Inscribed to Major General Brown, Conqueror of the North,"¹⁶ her "Dirge for the Public Funeral of Captain Lawrence" of the ill-fated Chesapeake,¹⁷ her "Naval Song" in honor of Commodore Perry's victory,¹⁸ and her "Prophecy" addressed to Commodore John Rodgers, defender of Baltimore.¹⁹ The termination of this unpopular war Mrs. Morton welcomed in a "Song for the Public Celebration of the National Peace,"²⁰ set to the tune of "Rule, Britannia" and bearing the refrain,

Hail Columbia! Columbia blest and free,
The Star of Empire beams on thee.

Late in 1816 Mrs. Morton was greatly comforted by the return of Charlotte, now the mother of three children, to stay with her while Dexter was establishing himself in the South. In the

¹⁴See *Columbian Centinel* for Saturday, 26 January, 1811.

¹⁵*Journal of Proceedings*, p. 186.

¹⁶*M.M.I.T.*, p. 217.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 214.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

spring of 1819, her husband sent for her to join him. During the ensuing summer she contracted a fever and died at Montgomery on 17 August. This severe blow was followed the next spring, 17 May, 1820, by the death of Mrs. Morton's mother, Sarah (Wentworth) Apthorp, in Quincy, in her eighty-fifth year. Her obituary, probably written by her daughter, which appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* of Saturday, 20 May, says:

As few have arrived to an age so advanced, still fewer can be commemorated for qualities so excellent. To a mind of uncommon strength and energy, she united the virtues of fortitude in the afflictions of life, and patience and christian resignation under the visitations of pain and sickness. In the christian religion, according to the tenets and mode of worship in which she was educated from her youth, she most sincerely professed her entire faith; and died in a calm and composed state, surrounded in her last moments by her surviving children, who sincerely felt the loss of a kind and loving parent; but none more severely than the daughter who for many of the last years of her life had devoted nearly the whole of her time to the comfort and happiness of so good a mother.

In this year Perez Morton served as a delegate from Dorchester to the convention held for revising the state constitution, in which he played an important part, acting as chairman of the committee of the whole "on the reports of the select committee on the judiciary power."²¹ He continued to act as Attorney-General till 1832 and is described as having been "unwearied and unswerving in the discharge of his official duties."²²

When, in December, 1820, Daniel Webster pronounced his oration on the two hundredth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Mrs. Morton acclaimed him, upon reading the account of his address, in "Stanzas, Inscribed to the Orator of the Century."²³ Webster was already an acquaintance of the Mortons, having been earlier in the same year a fellow-member with Perez in the State Constitutional Convention. Ten years later they were to be further associated as counsel for the prosecution in the celebrated Knapp trial at Salem for the murder of Captain Joseph White.²⁴

²¹*Transactions Col. Soc. of Mass.*, Vol. v, p. 292.
²²*The Atlas*, Boston, Tuesday, 17 October, 1837.

²³*M.M.I.T.*, p. 176.
²⁴Clapp, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Mrs. Morton kept up her friendship with John and Abigail Adams, as is indicated by the title of one of her poems, "Stanzas. Written on a Social Visit to the Retired Patriot, John Adams."²⁵ A letter from the aged ex-president to Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, Professor of Medicine at Harvard, in 1821, in a playful discussion of genius, remarks of her, "Mrs. Morton says Genius is Sorrow's Child."²⁶ Adams is here quoting from Mrs. Morton's lines to Gilbert Stuart, in the *Port Folio*, 13 June, 1803:

Genius is Sorrow's child, to Want allied,
Consol'd by Glory, and sustain'd by Pride.

Another friend who was a frequent caller at the home of the Mortons during this period was Isaiah Thomas of Worcester, who faithfully records his various calls in his diary.²⁷ He seems to have been on friendly terms with them both; and they often called to see him when he visited his old partner, Ebenezer Andrews, at the latter's home in Dorchester. An interesting entry in Mr. Thomas's accounts is an item for 22 July, 1823, "Cash paid away—Mrs. Morton's book—\$2.50." This was a copy of *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, for which he had subscribed and which on his return to Worcester he presented to the library of the American Antiquarian Society.

This book, *My Mind and Its Thoughts, in Sketches, Fragments, and Essays*, issued probably early in the summer of 1823, was Mrs. Morton's last published work, and the only one to appear over the author's real name: "Sarah Wentworth Morton, of Dorchester, Mass." The title page bears this quotation:

I stood among them, but not of them—
In a shroud of thoughts, which were not *their* thoughts.

The introduction, signed S. W. M. and dated Dorchester, 1822, has for its title "Response Courteous to the Question Imperious, by Way of Introduction."²⁸ In this she anticipates possible objections with the explanation that while some of her sketches have

²⁵*M.M.I.T.*, p. 194.

²⁶Quoted in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 139, p. 783.

²⁷*Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society*, Vol. x.

²⁸pp. xv-xvii.

been based upon her observation of actual persons, none of them is to be regarded as definitely referring to or reflecting upon any individual.

In an "Apology" at the end of the book, she gives an account of the origin of the work and her motives in publishing it:²⁹

A series of disappointments, with distress, cruelly aggravated by the premature death of very dear children, having left that stagnation of heart, and that pulsation of brain, which sometimes seems to precede the most deplorable of human miseries; to avert the apprehended possibility of this, the aid of constant occupation, and continued self-examination, was resorted to; that self-examination inducing recollection, and impelling resolution, as to cause, effect, and remedy.

The early morning and the late evening, given to the question of her own faults, many mistakes, and continued afflictions, the result of such enquiry was committed to fragments of paper, with the single intent of being referred to, and acted upon by the author's solitary self, who—*not of the world, yet stood among them*—and met the frowns, and passed the smiles of the many, and had *Thoughts*, and essayed to write of them also.

Finally, the accumulation of Fragments occasioning difficulty of selection, these were arranged by the author, and slowly transcribed into one manuscript—sufficient for a book—that is, sufficient in pages—but probably insufficient in every other requisite; this was her belief, and this belief virtually confirmed by the opinion of some to whom a very small portion of the work had been timidly communicated.

And yet, under every personal and particular discouragement, the author could think that those poor fragments, which had done so much for the dispositions of her own mind, might, under similar exigencies, effect something for the benefit of others; and with this impression stamped on her heart, she had the temerity to apply to one, who honours and hallows the cloth that he wears, and by the unerring genius of that one, was countenanced, favoured, and encouraged, and did venture—even amid existing fears, appalling predictions, and conscious inefficiency, to hope, and to ask for patronage—and that patronage was awarded by the gentle and the generous; and if ultimately supposed to have been lavished upon the dull, and the incompetent, will surely not be thrown away upon the assuming and the ungrateful.

S. W. M.

²⁹pp. 287-8.

The edition was sold by subscription and probably was limited to about two hundred copies. Among the subscribers—a list of nearly five pages at the end of the volume—appear the names of John Adams, the Governor and the Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, the Chief Justice, Isaiah Thomas, and many other prominent and celebrated personages of the day.

As the title of the book indicates, it is a miscellany of prose and poetry. The first section, 109 pages, is chiefly composed of 121 brief prose sketches or "fragments," usually single paragraphs. These deal with such themes as Adversity, Anger, Beauty and Youth, Conscience, and Happiness and Pleasure. These didactic pieces vary in length from two lines,³⁰

If VIRTUE be not always its own reward, yet admit this infallible axiom, that VICE is always its own avenger,

to the longest, which is forty-four lines. These "fragments" are interspersed at irregular intervals with poems, generally accompanying or illustrating the prose observations. Toward the end are inserted several occasional poems, particularly a group of seven written at the time of her visit to Washington and Philadelphia in 1802 or 1803. An example of the prose fragments is the following, on "Happiness":³¹

Next to the beauty of virtue, is that of HAPPINESS; causing the eye to speak unutterable things, the complexion to bloom, and the countenance to open and brighten, and harmonize with that look of heaven which stamps the human face divine.

Goodness is often known to exist without HAPPINESS; but never did the angel of felicity illumine the features of the wicked.

At the end of the first section come a series of six "Paradoxes," short essays, entitled respectively "Necessity," "Erring Mortals," "Love and Glory," "Zeal," "Quiet," and "Love of Country," followed by two "Odes to Time."³²

Part II comprises 157 pages, in several sections: "The World and Its Ways," "Essays," "Hymns," and "Monodies, Elegies, and Stanzas." Of these the last two are entirely in verse; the first

³⁰M.M.I.T., p. 25.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 65.

³²See above, page 79.

two are prose and verse intermixed. The essays, thirty in number, are more elaborately developed, some running through six or seven pages, though most do not exceed two in length. They are mainly concerned with abstract or religious subjects. One deals with the character of Prince Eugene of Savoy.

The poems in the volume had mostly appeared earlier in newspapers or magazines under her several pen-names, "Philenia," "Constantia," or "Cambria" and have in many cases been described above. The prose articles, so far as is known, had not been previously printed.

As has already been indicated, most of the poems included are occasional or tributary in nature, with some reflective and devotional lyrics. The reader is frequently impressed with her pride in her family and devotion to her husband and children. Perhaps the most characteristic poem in the collection is her "Invocation to the Shades of my Ancestors, Wentworth and Apthorp," the final selection in the book. Fifteen pages of notes, identifying persons and occasions for many of the poems, complete the volume. Those which refer to herself or her family are among the chief sources of information regarding her.

Two long reviews of this work appeared, one by James G. Brooks in the *New York Evening Post*,³³ and another in the *Columbian Centinel*,³⁴ Boston. Both are highly eulogistic. Brooks begs leave to omit that part of a critic's duty which consists in pointing out the faults of a work, adding that,

On plucking the weeds from a beautiful parterre, we frequently pluck with them the fairest flowers.

Of the positive qualities of the book, he says:

Its distinguishing characteristics are strong feeling and strong thought... A correctness of thought, a glow of imagination, and a deep tone of feeling pervades the whole; and we frequently meet with flashes of that fine romantic spirit, which, fatal as it may be sometimes to happiness, casts a beautiful and interesting hue upon nature and upon humanity...

She reasons on affliction like one who has felt its barbed arrow in her bosom; on beneficence like one who has felt its emotion; on

³³Quoted in the *Columbian Centinel*, Wednesday, 30 July, 1823.
³⁴*Columbian Centinel*, Saturday, 2 October, 1823.

fortune like one who has experienced its capricious inconstancy; and on youth and beauty like one who has possessed their bewitching but evanescent bloom, and who still possesses their refined and pure feelings. She looks upon nature both with a poetical and philosophical eye, and improves the understanding whilst she delights the fancy, and softens the heart. We are aware that these may be called hyperbolic praises. But, once more, we refer to the book itself. If any man can read it without strong respect, and admiration for the fine mind it evinces, his taste is not much to be envied.

The *Centinel* review, signed "Amicus," quotes several selections from the book: from the introduction, the "Apology;" from "Thoughts;" from the essay on "Adversity;" from that on "Rights and Wrongs;" and from the poem on the death of her son. "Amicus" closes his review by

merely remarking that it is not intended to recommend this work as faultless; but we know not any work which has lately issued from the press, that has a better tendency to improve the heart, the morals, or the manners of the community than the one before us.

Both reviews are graceful tributes by critics of a younger generation to the waning reputation of an elderly poetess who had once enjoyed the chief literary distinction among her sex in America.

Though Mrs. Morton doubtless continued to write verses after 1823, nothing from her pen is known to have been preserved. A small volume containing about a half dozen poems, published anonymously at Boston in 1839 by Dutton and Wentworth, is attributed to Mrs. Morton conjecturally, in a handwritten note in the Columbia University Library copy, probably on the basis of one of the poems contained, which has to do with a grave near the monument of Judge Morton at Taunton. The collection, entitled *Nature: On Freedom of Mind and Other Poems*, shows no similarity, in sentiments or verse style, to Philenia's poetry.

Mr. Morton retired from office in 1832, at the ripe age of eighty-one years. Our last picture of him and his wife is given in the words of David Clapp, who was then a child:³⁵

The families of herself and her husband were connected in various ways with the leading characters of the time, and the Pavilion where the Mortons resided—in itself a unique and most attractive

³⁵Clapp, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

building—was for many years the centre of a brilliant array of men and women conspicuous in law, literature and fashion. Being brought up myself in its near vicinity, I well remember it and its inmates from my earliest years, and can now distinctly recall the aged Morton couple seated on their broad piazza and enjoying the south-westerly summer breezes as they swept across the open plain.

Perez Morton's death occurred at his home in Dorchester, on Saturday, 14 October, 1837. According to his obituary notice,²⁸

His last hours exhibited a beautiful instance of the power of religion in bestowing fortitude and resignation in the midst of much suffering and weakness.

His will, dated 1 August, 1836, after requesting that he be buried "with as little expense, as may be consistent with Christian burial,"²⁹ leaves all his property to his wife, if she survive him, and in case of her decease, to his two daughters, Sarah Apthorp Cunningham and Anna Louisa Morton, and to the three children of his deceased daughter Charlotte Dexter. He mentions his daughter Sarah particularly, and leaves to her, in addition to a third part of his estate, two shares in the Kennebec Bridge. At the time of his death, however, the inventory of his estate records that he had "no property liable by Law to be administered." Since that time, on two separate occasions, awards have been made to his estate by the United States Treasury on certain French Spoliation claims. The first of these was \$500, in 1899; the second \$1215.62, in 1905. After the payment of expenses, the remainder of these sums was divided among the next of kin.

The executor, Peter C. Brooks, Esquire, apparently to secure Mrs. Morton in the possession of the Pleasant Street property, made out a deed of it to her in fee simple, 20 July, 1838. Three years later, on 29 October, 1841, she sold the estate to William D. Swan, "instructor", of Dorchester, for \$7,000.³⁰ Not long afterward the Pavilion was torn down.

²⁸*The Atlas*, Boston, Tuesday, 17 October, 1837.

²⁹Norfolk County Registry of Probate. Wills, Lib. 13, Fol. 228.

³⁰Norfolk County Deeds. An excellent plan of the Morton property, bordering on Pleasant, Stoughton, and Myrtle Streets, accompanies this deed.

³¹Clapp, *op. cit.*, p. 82.



MRS. SARAH WENTWORTH MORTON IN 1802

In possession of Miss Mary
Griselda Gray, of Halifax, N. S.

Soon after her husband's death, Mrs. Morton returned to her ancestral home in that part of Braintree which had been set off as Quincy. Here she resided with her sister, Elizabeth Apthorp, until the latter's death. Now over eighty years old, she lived quietly, though taking much interest in Christ Church. Benefactions to this Episcopal church are alluded to in an account of her at the time of her death.⁴⁰ On 26 April, 1841,⁴¹ she was accorded the thanks of the church for a present of two valuable silver patens or Communion plates, "For Christ Church, Quincy, from Sarah Wentworth Morton, as being one of four generations that have worshiped at this altar by the name of Apthorp."⁴²

Before leaving Dorchester, she drew up her final will and testament on 30 April, 1841, adding later, in 1843, a codicil evidently because of the decease of the first-appointed executor.⁴³ After making certain individual bequests, she directs that her estate be sold and the proceeds divided in four equal shares among her two daughters then living, her eldest grand-daughter, Griselda Eastwick Clinch, and the children of her deceased daughter, Charlotte Dexter. In accordance with her husband's request, she gave special remembrance to their eldest daughter, Sarah Cunningham, in leaving to her, as he had done, two shares in the Kennebec Bridge, at Augusta. In addition to this and other items, she bequeathed to this daughter "also my case of silver spoons, marked S A descended from my first ancestor known to me."⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that the first bequest in her will is made for the relief of a poor woman in Dorchester—probably a former servant:

I give & bequeath all my common & ordinary apparel, such as my daughters would not themselves wear, to wit, linens cottons calicoes Flannels & stockings with three of the most worn black gowns or pelisses & the skirts appertaining thereto, also my old bombazine mourning cloak & my two oldest black bonnets the one of velvet, the other of black silk or satin, also a good trunk, with a good lock

⁴⁰See below, note 50.

⁴¹Christ Church records, vol. II, 26 April, 1841.

⁴²Grainger, William, *The Oldest Parish in Massachusetts... Christ Church, Quincy*, p. 37.

⁴³Norfolk County Registry of Probate, Lib. 13, Fol. 230.

⁴⁴Presumably Susan Ward, wife of East Apthorp.

thereto Also Twenty Dollars in cash to Elisabeth Smith or said Dorchester wife of Henry Smith⁴⁵ in relief of her & her large & helpless family to her & her heirs & assigns forever.

Her personal estate at the time of her death was appraised at about \$4,200, the only real estate in her possession being a pew in Christ Church, valued at \$35. The inventory also listed, as assets not included in the valuation, claims against the United States Treasury to the amount of \$5,250 for French spoliation and \$33,384.32½ on account of lands in Georgia.⁴⁶ Nothing, presumably, was ever realized from the last.

Neither of the daughters mentioned in Mrs. Morton's will survived her. A series of bereavements between 1843 and 1845, in fact, deprived her of her last immediate relatives, unless a sister, Lucy Apthorp Winbolt, who would then have been over seventy-five, was still alive in England. Her unmarried daughter, Anna Louisa Morton, died 31 March, 1843, at the home of the Reverend Joseph H. Clinch,⁴⁷ in South Boston, in whose household she had been living. The second surviving daughter, Sarah Apthorp Cunningham, now a widow, died in Dorchester, 14 July, 1844. And on 18 February, 1845, died Mrs. Morton's younger sister, Elizabeth Apthorp, with whom she had made her home.

Mrs. Morton's health was apparently good until a little before her death.⁴⁸ She died on 14 May, 1846, after a severe illness of short duration, at her home in Quincy. Her funeral services were held on the afternoon of Saturday, the sixteenth; and her body was taken to Boston for burial in the Apthorp family tomb, under King's Chapel.⁴⁹ Her will had contained a curious provision with regard to the manner in which she should be buried:

I direct my body to be interred in the Apthorp Family tomb No. 2 under the king's chapel in the city of Boston beneath the marble monument of my honored Grand-father & direct that the body of my late beloved daughter Frances Wentworth Morton be removed from the tomb in Dorchester to the aforesaid tomb in Boston & that the

⁴⁵A Henry Smith, Jr., had been a witness to the will of Perez Morton.

⁴⁶Norfolk County Probate Records.

⁴⁷Her obituary notice in the *Quincy Patriot*, 8 April, 1843, gives his name erroneously as John S. Clinch.

⁴⁸See obituary notice below.

⁴⁹Christ Church records, vol. II, p. 98.

bodies of my said beloved daughter Frances Wentworth Morton & that of my deceased dear Son Charles Ward Apthorp Morton now lying in said family tomb be placed on each side of my own remains on a platform of bricks or stone masonry erected at the extreme end of the tomb rising sufficiently near its roof or top to prevent any other ever being inserted above these & that the three bodies be enclosed in coffins of granite or other durable stone, my own remains between those of my two dearly beloved & lamented—The expense of this, with other funeral expenses & costs & all my just debts to be paid as soon as possible after my decease & before any other distribution shall be made.

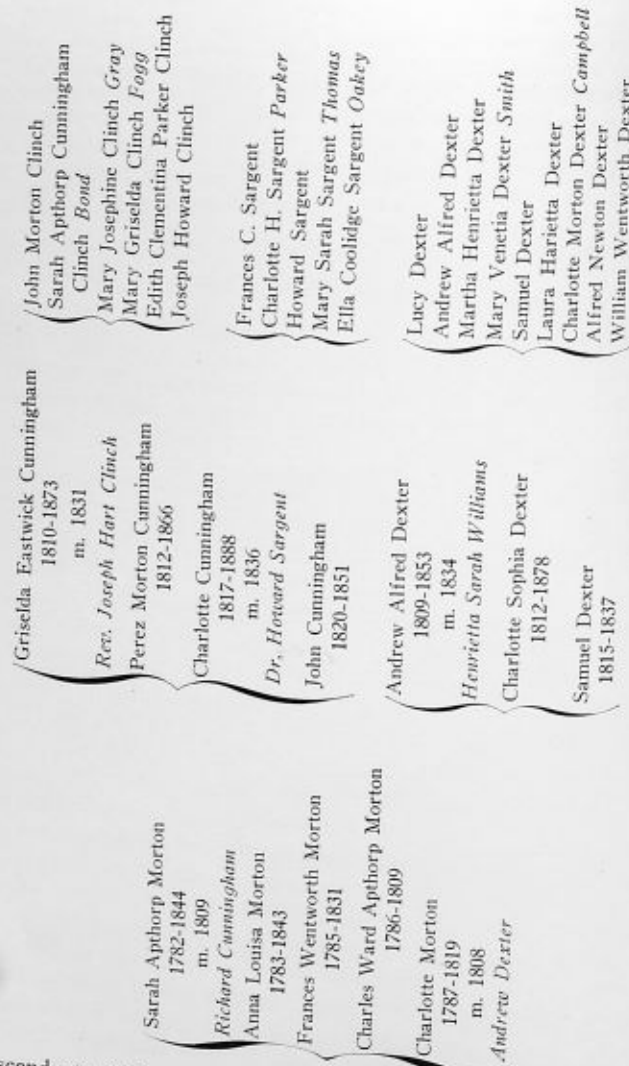
A contemporary newspaper obituary notice said of her:⁵⁰

Mrs. M. had attained "an age which few survive", in the full possession of her faculties, and, without apparent physical decay, her life promised to be extended to a much longer term. . . . The Episcopal Church in Quincy has lost in her a benefactor, and the town a warm friend.

Mrs. Morton's children have been discussed in the foregoing pages. Of her grandchildren, the eldest was Andrew Alfred Dexter, Charlotte's son, born probably in Boston in 1809. He married Harrietta Sarah Williams and died in 1853 or 1854. Four of his children were living in Texas in 1900, and grandchildren in Montgomery and New York City. His sister, Charlotte Sophia Dexter, born in 1812, was perhaps brought up by her grandmother Morton; at least she was living in Quincy when remembered in the latter's will in 1838. She lived until 1878. The third child of the family, Samuel, born in 1815, died in Texas in 1837.

Of the Cunningham children, Sarah's offspring, Griselda Eastwick, born in 1810, probably in Windsor, Nova Scotia, married in 1831 the Reverend Joseph Hart Clinch, a clergyman of the Episcopal church. He was in charge of a church in South Boston for several years and acted as executor of Mrs. Morton's estate. Griselda died in 1873. Descendants of her daughters Sarah Apthorp Cunningham Bond and Mary Griselda Fogg are living in Boston; and of another, Mary Griselda Gray, in Nova Scotia. Perez Morton Cunningham (1812-1866), son of Sarah, was an attorney at law in Windsor, Nova Scotia. His sister, Charlotte

⁵⁰A clipping from an unidentified newspaper, pasted into the Harvard University copy of *My Mind and Its Thoughts*.



Descendants of Perez and Sarah Wentworth (Apthorp) Morton
(Italicized names are those of persons intermarried with Morton descendants)

Cunningham, married Dr. Howard Sargent of Boston, in 1836, and left descendants by the names of Sargent, Apthorp, Oakley, and Parker in Boston, Cambridge, and vicinity. She was born in 1818 and died in 1888. John Cunningham, the youngest brother, died unmarried in 1851, aged thirty-one.

Some years after her death, Mrs. Morton's name began to be connected with the long-forgotten anonymous novel *The Power of Sympathy*, first recalled to public attention, in 1850, apparently, by Buckingham's reference to its publication and suppression.⁵¹ William Hill Brown had died in North Carolina in 1793, over a half century before; and owing to the somewhat discreditable circumstances of its production, the few surviving relatives who knew of his connection with it were in all probability more concerned with concealing than proclaiming his authorship. It was thus not unnatural that antiquarians casting about for an author, knowing of the Morton family scandal and of Mrs. Morton's literary fame but unacquainted with the content or nature of her output, should jump to the conclusion that she was the writer, overlooking the fact that she would thus have been publishing the shame of her husband and of a sister not five months dead.⁵² Such, at least, seems to have been the supposition of an anonymous querist in the *Boston Transcript*, 2 May, 1867, who referred to the book as "written by a lady," though no such intimation is afforded by the novel itself.

Somewhat earlier, not later than 1860, this ascription had been definitely made, in a manuscript note by Samuel Jennison, of Brookfield, Mass., who was engaged at odd times for fifty years before his death in the year named, in compiling data for an American biographical dictionary. Sometime after 1820,⁵³ he jotted down a few items regarding Mrs. Morton's early work. Halfway

⁵¹*Specimens of Newspaper Literature*, Vol. I, p. 323. Buckingham offers no conjecture as to the author. So far as has been found, his is the first datable mention of the novel after 1790's.

⁵²A more absurd instance of the same method of reasoning in Mrs. Morton's case has already been noted above, p. 38, note. The fact that a contemporary, Mrs. Hannah Webster Foster, in *The Coquette*, 1797, had used the tragic death of a distant kinswoman of her husband's nine years before as the basis of her plot may have suggested a similar conjecture here.

⁵³Since he refers to John Trecothick Apthorp as "several years Treasurer of Massachusetts," Apthorp's term was 1815-1820.

down the same sheet, in the considerably altered handwriting of Jennison's later notes, is added the following sentence:⁵⁴

Her "Power of Sympathy" in 2 small 24mo. volumes, published at Boston in 1789, without the author's name is only noticeable as the first experiment of novel writing in N. England.

No authority for this statement, if there was any, is indicated; and his brief account reveals several omissions and inaccuracies.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, there is small reason to doubt that his statement represented the opinion of the few persons who in the 1850's and 1860's had ever heard of the book.⁵⁶

It was not until nearly a century after the novel was published, and over thirty years after the deaths of Mrs. Morton and all her relatives near enough to make an authoritative denial, that *The Power of Sympathy* was apparently ever associated in print with her name. This was by Francis Samuel Drake, who in his *History of Roxbury*, 1878, remarked:

The seduction of a near and dear relative is said to have formed the ground work of the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy*, written by Mrs. Morton in 1787.

Drake, like Jennison, offered no proof for his assertion; and he is in error as to the date of the work and the prominence of the "Ophelia" episode in the plot. Evidently, he had never read it. Drake's assertion went unchallenged, however, until the autumn of 1894, after the novel had been reprinted in book form by Walter Littlefield as Mrs. Morton's work. While it was being again reissued serially in the *Bostonian* magazine, a niece of Brown, Mrs. Rebecca Valentine Thompson, came forward with the story of her uncle's responsibility for it. The editor of the *Bostonian*, Arthur W. Brayley, called upon Mrs. Thompson; acknowledged

⁵⁴Jennison's notes are preserved in the Am. Antiquarian Soc. Library, at Worcester.

⁵⁵Thus no mention is made of two of her chief works, *Beacon Hill* and *My Mind and Its Thoughts*, and her father's name is left blank; an incorrect date is given for *Ouâbi*, and her cousin, John T. Apthorp, is called her brother.

⁵⁶Probably the only copy in any library in 1850 was that of Isaiah Thomas, presented to the American Antiquarian Society.

the authenticity of her account in an article, "The Real Author of *The Power of Sympathy*," in the December issue; and completed the printing of the novel under the name of William Hill Brown. Mr. Littlefield, then associated with Brayley, though adhering to his original view, made no attempt, then or subsequently, to establish his claim for Mrs. Morton or to disprove Brown's authorship.

In the meantime, quite a little apocrypha had grown up around Mrs. Morton's memory, based upon Drake's unsupported statement. This was repeated, with imaginative embellishments, by John Ward Dean,⁵⁷ Marion A. McBride,⁵⁸ William Dana Orcutt,⁵⁹ Littlefield,⁶⁰ and Brayley,⁶¹ until by 1894 the very room in the Morton-Taylor house in Dorchester was indicated, in which not only Mrs. Morton wrote the *Power of Sympathy* but also Perez Morton penned his memorable oration on the body of General Warren—despite the fact that the house was not erected until 1797. Littlefield had further referred to Mrs. Morton as the "self-acknowledged author" though she not only had not made any such acknowledgment but had plainly said in 1823 that she had previously had

neither leisure, nor disposition, nor capacity to write a book.⁶²

In dismissing this matter, it need only be said that an earnest and extended search has produced no item of evidence tending to prove either that Mrs. Morton wrote *The Power of Sympathy*, as asserted by Jennison and Drake, or even that anyone during her lifetime ever supposed that she did. Her descendants in several lines with whom Miss Pendleton corresponded had never heard of the novel or knew of it only through reading. Furthermore, the whole supposition is grossly inconsistent with the personality of Mrs. Morton as clearly revealed in her work—a woman whose affection for and almost inordinate pride in her family and her

⁵⁷N.E.H.G.R., Vol. XLVI, p. 82.

⁵⁸New England Magazine, May, 1890, "Some Old Dorchester Houses."

⁵⁹In his *Good Old Dorchester*, 1893, pp. 406-11.

⁶⁰Editor's Introduction to *The Power of Sympathy*, Boston, 1894, pp. x-xi.

⁶¹*Bostonian Magazine*, Oct., 1894, Editor's Preface to *The Power of Sympathy*.

⁶²M.M.I.T., p. xvi.

husband are perhaps her most marked characteristics. On the other hand, the numerous details of fact in Mrs. Thompson's account, when checked against records of the 1780's and 1790's, have proved remarkably accurate, while contemporary allusions pointing to Brown and similarities between the novel and his identified work leave little reasonable doubt that he was the author.⁶³

It is doubtless sufficient fame for Mrs. Morton to have been the chief poet of her sex in the America of her day, and to have reflected in her verse its concerns, its rising pride, hopes, and confidence, and its ambitious if inadequate attempts at self-expression. Perhaps her literary obituary was best written, from the point of view of her own time, by Joseph T. Buckingham in 1850, four years after her death:⁶⁴

The oblivion, which has fallen upon the literary reputation of Mrs. Morton, affords a melancholy lesson to the poets of the present generation, who are crowding the avenues to public favor. Fifty years ago,—one little half century,—the Poems of Philenia were as popular as those of the most popular of the magazine poets, of the year 1850. About twenty-five years ago, they were published in an imposing octavo, by one of the Boston booksellers; and the question was then often asked, who is Philenia? Who is Mrs. Morton? But that octavo, it is presumed, is not now to be found, except in some public library, or in those repositories of "antique books," kept in Cornhill by Messrs. Drake and Burnham. Yet which of the ladies who wrote for the magazines, the Souvenirs, and the Forget-me-nots, have produced anything sweeter and purer...?

⁶³The evidence supporting Brown's claims to authorship was set forth in a paper presented by Milton Ellis before the Modern Language Association of America in December, 1929, now in preparation for publication.

⁶⁴*Specimens of Newspaper Literature*, Vol. II, pp. 226-26.

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